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ABSTRACT

This document examines the public relations activities occurring in K-12 and intermediate school districts, needs for other activities, and how Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) can assist. Written surveys were mailed to 394 K-12 and Intermediate School District (ISD) superintendents. Analysis showed that very few school districts have a person who is devoted full time to public relations activities. The majority of the responding districts also had no established budget for school public relations. Titles and authors of the 18 articles included in the booklet are as follows: (1) "You Be the Judge: Are Program and Career Related?" (William Banach); (2) "P.A.C.E. Yourself for a Good Beginning" (Shirley Beckman); (3) "Crisis Planning: Being Prepared Isn't Just for Scouts" (Richard Egli); (4) "Millage Vote: Morning after Is New Beginning" (Cass Franks); (5) "Making the Most of Your Mall: A Tapestry of Talents" (Bob Freeham and Sandy Kus); (6) "Staff Recruitment: As Easy as 1, 2, 3 ... 4!" (Robert Gaskill); (7) "Research Conquers Mathophobia" (Ned S. Hubbell); (8) "Communicating School Finance without Mystery or Boredom" (David Kahn); (9) "Cheap Frills; Inexpensive Ways to Dress Up Your School PR Program" (Lois Lange); (10) "Are You a Part of the Cable Revolution?" (Jane McKinney); (11) "The P's and Q's of Publication Quality" (Hilary Nault); (12) "Stoking the Fires: Building Staff Morale" (Joanna Schultz); (13) "Let Realtors Know: Good Schools Sell Homes" (Kenson Siver); (14) What It Takes To Develop Effective Media Relationships" (Nancy Stark); (15) "Marketing Your Millage Election for Fun and Profit!" (Susan Stuber); (16) "Public Service Campaign Links Teachers and Parents" (Mel VandeGevel); (17) "Chalk Up a Winning Season for Building Level PR" (Nancy Bregi Warren); and (18) "Non-Parents and Schools: Let's Not Be Strangers in the Night" (Jay Young). Appended is a table for determining sample size, a list of survey techniques, and a list of public relations tips. (SI)

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HOT TOPICS

...in school public relations

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HOT TOPICS

...in school public relations

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FOREWORD

MSPRA PR Needs Assessment

by Kathy Feaster

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the Michigan School Public Relations Association research project was to identify public relations activities occurring in K-12 and intermediate school districts, identify needs for other activities and how MSPRA can assist. The survey was conducted in the spring, 1987.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Written surveys were mailed to all K-12 and ISD superintendents (n=394). Although not as high as desired, this represents a very good return rate for such a project, given that respondents in this "universe" are often on "overload" at this particular time of year.

Of the 394 returns, 87% were from the K-12 districts (n=344) and 11% from ISD's (n=42), while 2% gave no indication of the type of district.

Sixty-eight percent of the represented K-12 districts have an enrollment of 2,999 or fewer students, 25% were from districts with a student enrollment between 3,000 and 9,999, and 12% have 10,000 or more students. Two percent did not indicate their student enrollment.

Twenty-six percent of the represented ISD's covered an area which had a student enrollment between 3,000 and 9,999, while 69% covered an area with an enrollment of 10,000 or more students. Five percent gave no indication of enrollment in their area.

When applicable, responses in the report will be shown for both K-12 districts and ISD's. Statistically significant differences occur between these two subgroups when the difference in response to a particular question is 15% or more.

ANALYSES

The majority of the school districts responding (53%) have a person within their district who has specific public relations responsibilities. Very few, however, have a person whose full time is devoted to public relations activities; most of the districts have a part-time person (or persons), with other job responsibilities (41%).

The majority of the responding districts also have no established budget for school public relations (59%), nor do they have a written board policy concerning public relations (58%).

"Is there a person within your school district who has specific public relations responsibilities?"

	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Yes	53%	54%	41%
No	46%	45%	60%
No response	1%	1%	—

"If yes, how much time does this person regularly devote to public relations activities?"

	53% of All Respondents	54% of K-12 Districts	41% of ISD's
Full-time	9%	8%	14%
Part-time with other responsibilities	41%	42%	26%
Part-time with no other job responsibilities	4%	4%	—

"Does your school district have an established budget for school public relations?"

	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Yes	39%	41%	29%
No	59%	57%	67%
No response	2%	2%	4%

"Does your school district have a written board policy concerning public relations?"

	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Yes	37%	39%	26%
No	58%	57%	69%
No response	5%	4%	5%

When asked to rank a list of seven activities in order of importance (number 1 being the highest priority), highest rankings were offered for community involvement, staff development, publications and millage elections.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Community involvement	28%	23%	20%	13%	6%	2%	-%	-%
Staff development	20%	21%	15%	14%	12%	6%	1%	-
Publications	19%	18%	16%	15%	13%	12%	2%	-
Millage elections	16%	11%	14%	18%	16%	13%	4%	-
Media relations	6%	11%	19%	20%	19%	14%	2%	
Board of education training	5%	11%	9%	9%	18%	28%	7%	1%
Electronic media production	-	1%	1%	4%	4%	9%	59%	1%
Others	2%	-	-	1%	1%	-	-	1%
No selection of particular rank	4%	4%	6%	6%	11%	16%	25%	97%

Respondents were also offered a list of fourteen public relations topics and asked to indicate those about which they would like more information. Highest interest was shown in the topics of "low cost PR projects" (54%), "improving staff morale" (51%), "involving non-parents in the schools" (48%) and "telling the school budget story" (40%).

Significantly more K-12 respondents desired more information on involving non-parents in the schools, telling the school budget story and building level PR projects than did ISD respondents, while ISD respondents would like information on working with local media significantly moreso than would K-12 respondents.

	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Low cost PR projects	54%	55%	45%
Improving staff morale	51%	50%	57%
Involving non-parents in the schools	48%	51%	21%
Telling the school budget story	40%	42%	21%
Producing quality publications	39%	39%	38%
Building level PR projects	38%	40%	21%
Establishing a school PR program	32%	34%	17%
Millage	31%	33%	24%
Working with realtors/ local businesses	29%	30%	19%
Election strategy	24%	24%	14%
Crisis communications	23%	22%	24%
Using electronic media	18%	16%	26%
Working with local media	16%	13%	33%
Career development	9%	9%	14%
Other topics	1%	1%	—
No response	5%	5%	2%

The majority of the K-12 districts responding produce community newsletters (89%), building level newsletters (68%), board reports (61%), staff newsletters (60%) and specialty publications (55%), while the majority of ISD's produce board reports (74%), specialty publications (71%) and staff newsletters (62%). Only one percent of the districts said they produced no written or electronic internal or external communications publications.

"Which of the following are produced by your district?"

	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Community newsletter	83%	89%	36%
Building level newsletters	64%	68%	36%
Board reports	62%	61%	74%
Staff newsletter	60%	60%	62%
Specialty publications	57%	55%	71%
Annual reports	48%	49%	36%
Electronic media	17%	14%	36%
Others	4%	4%	7%
None	1%	1%	—
No response	2%	1%	2%

One of three school districts responding say they, or someone in their district, are members of MSPRA (38%) and 21% hold such a membership in the National School Public Relations Association.

MSPRA Membership	All Respondents	K-12 Districts	ISD's
Yes	38%	37%	48%
No	26%	26%	29%
No response	36%	38%	23%
NSPRA Membership	**All**	**K-12**	**ISD's**
Yes	21%	20%	21%
No	26%	26%	31%
No response	53%	54%	47%

It would appear that respondents find regional conferences, "MSPRA Memo" and professional networking to be the most useful services provided by MSPRA.

"MSPRA provides the following services to its members. Which would you find most useful? *(Rank in order of usefulness - #1 being most useful.)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Regional conference	17%	12%	11%	8%	6%	2%
"MSPRA Memo"	22%	16%	11%	9%	5%	1%
Professional networking	17%	18%	14%	7%	5%	1%
Statewide conferences	10%	15%	11%	11%	10%	2%
Professional resource library	6%	10%	11%	10%	9%	6%
Annual communications contest	—	2%	3%	3%	6%	30%
No selection of particular rank	18%	27%	49%	52%	59%	58%

"What additional services could MSPRA provide for you?"

	All Respondents
Packets — ready to use radio spots/newspaper articles/newsletters/sample materials/clip art	3%
Resource bank of new trends/PR innovations/ techniques/models/research data	2%
PR program support for small/rural districts	1%
More on desk-top publishing	1%
On-site PR analyses/clinics/idea sessions	1%
Job descriptions for PR positions	1%
None/nothing	2%
Miscellaneous services	3%
No response	88%

Kathy Feaster is Coordinator for Opinion Research and Millage Consultant for the Michigan State Board of Education's Project Outreach program.

Formerly the president of her own opinion research and millage consulting firm (called Feaster Famine), she also served as chief associate with Ned Hubbell and Associates of Port Huron.

YOU BE *the* JUDGE

Are program and career related?

by William Banach, ASPR

The longer I'm around the more I believe that . . .

- the perception is the reality
- you cannot attain what you cannot envision; and,
- competence creates credibility . . . and peace of mind.

These maxims, I believe, are among the building blocks of an effective communication program. They also are worthy principles for career development.

THE PERCEPTION IS THE REALITY

What people perceive is, for them, truth. If people think it's good, it is. If they believe it's bad, it is.

Ralph Nader created negative perceptions of the Corvair. In the public mind, he made it "unsafe at any speed." American propaganda helps us **know** the Ruskies **are** bad and can't be trusted. And we're all familiar with politicians who shoot themselves in the foot and confirm what most people already know.

An effective communication program understands the perceptions of people, and focuses on reinforcing, changing or accommodating them. Effective PR programs attend to what is going on in peoples' heads — what they perceive.

Career development application: Create the perception that you know what's going on. The best way to do this, of course, is to know what's going on. An effective communication person . . .

- knows about and understands the organization's internal and external environments
- understands how to deal with the perceptions in the organization's marketplace
- lets actions speak louder than words . . . but isn't afraid to use words.

YOU'LL NEVER SEE IT IF . . .

. . . you don't have a vision. As a communication professional I should be able to visualize the best communication program in the world. If I can see it, I can attain it. If I can't see it, I never will.

This, I believe, is true regardless of your profession. You must have a vision of what can be — you must know what Mecca looks like (even if you have to create it yourself). Such a vision gives you something to work toward — a destination on the roadmap before you.

Progress will only come if you develop a process for reaching higher and getting better. Progress does not come unless it's always on the agenda.

Career development application: Find a friend. Talk about the profession. Brainstorm what can be. Picture yourself orchestrating it. Freeze the frame. Write down what's in the picture — where are you? What skills do you have? What are you doing? With whom? Then do an honest assessment of the current you, and match it against the visionary you. The differences are the things you should be working on.

COMPETENCE AND CREDIBILITY

Competence is a professional cornerstone. In fact, to me the word professional equates with competence. And that is always my target — to be the best. (Country singer Roy Acuff says: If you aim too low your bullets bounce in the dust.")

Dr. William J. Banach

Sometimes you make it, sometimes you don't. But no one can fault you for striving to be the best, and it does great things for your credibility. (Woody Allen said 80 percent of success is showing up. Imagine the impact if you are competent when you make your appearance!)

Career development application: Competence is a characteristic every employer seeks. It is your foot in the door, and it is the trait that lets you know when you've performed well. It is what ups your odds.

Unfortunately, star-studded opportunities do not always fall to the competent person with vision. But they rarely go to an incompetent without focus.

Develop a vision and become competent enough to attain it. Do something today that will make you better tomorrow. You may not wind up as grand champion, but you will be perceived as a real pro. You will have matched perception with reality, and satisfied the most important critic of all — yourself. Is that important? You judge.

Dr. William J. Banach is Assistant Superintendent at Macomb Intermediate School District. He is also chairman of his own marketing and survey research firm.

Bill is a past president of the National School Public Relations Association, and now travels extensively in the United States and Canada working with a client list ranging from school districts to the Fortune 500. His articles have appeared in over 100 journals and magazines.

Executive Educator magazine named Bill "one of North America's Top 100 School Executives," and his colleagues list him among the nation's "most respected" communication professionals.

For A Good Beginning P.A.C.E. Yourself

You are it — the public relations person in your district. The superintendent called you in and said, "We need PR. Do it." Where to start?

When you are back at your desk, take out a sheet of paper and write down four words:

Planning
Action
Communication
Evaluation

Those four words represent the public relations process and should be the backbone of everything you do. It will help you to control your own destiny instead of always being driven by the whims of others. The goal is to position yourself in a proactive vs. a reactive position.

Let's look at each of these four steps as you start your district's PR program.

Planning

This step involves research. Contact neighboring districts and your intermediate district for their programs and policies. Join MSPRA and NSPRA and request their resource materials. Find out what the administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents want in terms of information and how they see your school. Survey, informally.

Outline your objectives. Draft a board policy on communications. Establish procedures and a budget. Write a plan for a year. Obtain approval to proceed.

Action

Develop an internal communications committee. Get to know the people and resources in your district. Work at establishing credibility and a reputation for supporting the work of the district and its staff. Get to know the media.

Communicate

Let people know how PR can help them. Visit schools. Be positive. Develop the communication materials that your research has indicated are needed — district newsletter, video, staff newsletter, breakfast with the superintendent. Do those things in an orderly manner. Establish priorities.

Evaluate

Survey your community. Listen to the staff. What are they saying about your efforts? Use this information to improve your program. Ask yourself, did you meet your goals?

Take to heart the advice of a PR professional, Arthur W. Page, early vice-president for public relations for A.T. & T.:

Principles of Public Relations

Tell the truth.

Prove it with action.

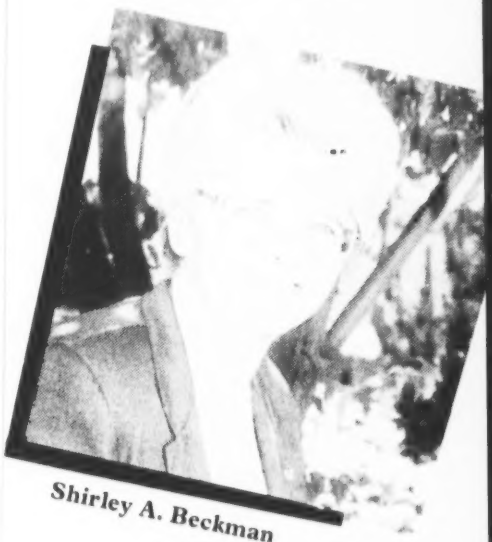
Listen to the consumer.

Manage for tomorrow.

Consider public relations as if the whole company depends on it . . . it does.

Remain calm, patient and good-humored.

— And the hardest one is to remain calm, patient and good-humored.



Shirley A. Beckman

Shirley A. Beckman, APR has been Public Information Specialist at Ingham Intermediate School District for nine years. A former newspaper reporter, and president of MSPRA, she is current president of the Central Michigan Chapter of Public Relations Society of America. She is a member of NSPRA.

CRISIS PLANNING —

Being prepared isn't just for scouts

by Richard A. Egli, ASPR

Webster defines crisis as "a time of great danger or trouble, whose outcome decides whether possible bad consequences will follow." The Chinese character for crisis is composed of two figures, one representing danger, the other representing opportunity.

A crisis can take many forms. It can be an act of nature such as a fire, an ice storm, a tornado or an earthquake. It can take a more human and personal form such as a bomb threat, a kidnapping, civil disturbance or a bus accident.

In public schools today, crisis can come at any time. Competition in news reporting almost guarantees the entire community will quickly know about the crisis.

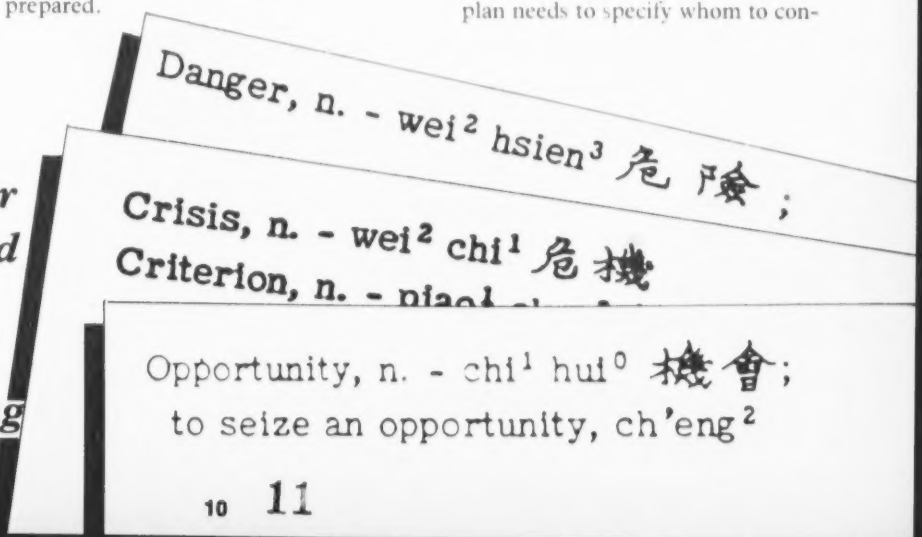
Regardless of the nature of the crisis, there are some actions which you can take to minimize negative impact. These actions break logically into three phases — pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis.

PRE-CRISIS PLANNING IS IMPERATIVE

Pre-crisis is obviously the time to plan — time that many people never find because of the press of daily work. However, it is imperative to plan if we want to be properly prepared.

Planning requires consideration and preparation of a **written** crisis plan which details what needs to be done and who needs to be informed.

First, the plan needs to focus on the kinds of actions required for the safety and well-being of all persons involved in the crisis. Second, the plan needs to specify whom to con-



The Chinese character for crisis is composed of two figures, one representing danger, the other representing opportunity.

tact, in what priority, and what to say. Contact between employees and media representatives is particularly critical. Statements need to be factual and limited to what is actually known rather than what rumors or hearsay may be developing.

The crisis plan should contain a contact list of both office and residence phone numbers of district personnel. The plan should indicate who will be in charge if the superintendent is away from the district and who will be in charge if the principal is away from the building. The plan should be placed in an easily accessible and particularly visible binder.

Crisis planning follows the scout motto "Be prepared." The plan must be in writing for pre-crisis review and testing by those who will be using it.

Because there is little time for planning when a crisis occurs, checklists in the crisis plan can help bring order out of chaos. For example, in the case of a bomb threat, a checklist should ask for the exact words of the caller, a description of the caller's voice, whether there was background noise and what it was, and whether the voice sounded familiar. The checklist should also include questions to ask the caller such as: "When is the bomb going to explode?" "Where is it?" "What kind is it?" "What does it look like?" "Why was it placed?" "Where is this call coming from?" and "What is your name?" The form should also have a place for the name of the person receiving the call and the time of the call. A space for additional remarks is also needed.

GOOD PLANNING MAKES CRISIS PERFORMANCE ALMOST AUTOMATIC

The second phase of a crisis is the actual event. If the crisis plan is sound and is used, the crisis itself may seem almost an anti-climax, because all contingencies have been considered. As in dramatics, if rehearsal is well done, performance is almost automatic.

POST-CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS BRING CLOSURE

Post-crisis handling of communications can be an important part of bringing the crisis to the best possible closure. Consider these ideas:

- Bringing in support personnel to combat trauma among students and staff.
- Sending information home about the crisis situation and how it was handled.
- Providing information to parents about what they might expect from their youngsters and how they might help their youngsters work through any trauma the crisis created.
- During post-crisis time, reevaluate and update the crisis plan.

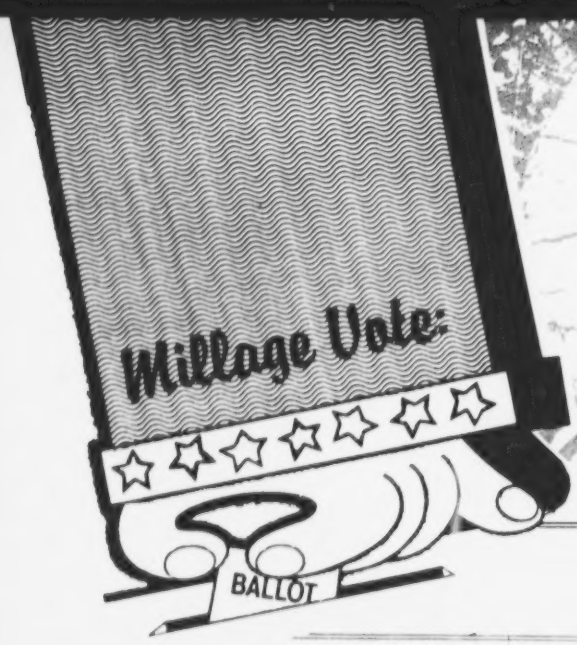
Although a crisis is not something any of us enjoy, it is a constant possibility in today's educational world. As professionals, we need to prepare for that possibility and meet it in a logical and systematic manner. With a written and tested plan, and actions taken based on that plan, we can look back on a crisis as an unfortunate event which was effectively handled — a time when danger and opportunity were met squarely and dealt with effectively.

Richard A. Egli

Richard A. Egli came to education with a varied background ranging from media management to sales and general labor. His formal training includes a Master of Arts degree in communications from Michigan State University.

He has taught speech and journalism at the high school level and instructional technology, telecommunications and media at the college level.

He was accredited by the National School Public Relations Association in 1983 and is a past president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association. As a veteran in the public relations field, he has faced many of the crises which may confront school districts.



Morning After

by Cass Franks, ASPR

The phrase, "morning after," is usually associated with unhappy things such as alcoholic hangovers, failed efforts, etc.

It needn't be. In our district, "morning after" characterizes a planning system that works wonders at election time. To us the day following a successful election, or a happy "morning after," is a perfect time to prepare to win the next one that's sure to come in the future.

Several years ago, the Utica Community Schools passed a 4.95 mill property tax increase by a 60% plurality the first time on the ballot. Nearly two years earlier, a 2.5 mill increase passed by a 65% margin and a $28 million bond issue by 60%; again on the first try. Renewals have also been averaging an 80%-plus plurality.

The key to the success of these proposals are two "morning after," steps: 1. a post-election survey and 2. an analysis of who actually voted on the issue.

1. In the post-election survey we asked a randomly-selected audience three-questions: a. the major sources of information on the proposals, b. whether the information people had received helped them to make an informal ballot decision, and c. what information was particularly interesting or helpful.

Among other things, the answers to the questions tell us what media sources to use heavily to get our messages across in the future, whether the "facts" in our literature contained enough supporting information to be believed, and the major issues that helped voters make a final decision.

Breaking down the responses in categories of parents and non-parents, males and females, provides additional information. For example, we nearly always discover newspapers are a major source of information for males alone and that parents care more than non-parents about possible cutbacks if a proposal fails. The value of this planning information is obvious.

"To us, the day following a successful election, or a happy morning after, is a perfect time to prepare to win the next one that's sure to come in the future."

2. The analysis of who actually voted, the second "morning after" step, will sketch a statistical "picture" of supporters and non-supporters by precinct and through the community. Volunteer campaign groups can conduct this analysis by reviewing the voter registration cards and recording the name, address, sex, age and voting record of each person that cast a ballot.

...Is New Beginning

Next, comparisons can be made between the yes-no vote in a precinct and school district and its correlation to the recorded information. For example, it is likely that there will be a close correlation between youth and the yes vote; the younger the voters the more positive the turnout. Similarly, the more females that vote, the higher number of positive ballots cast.

If it is possible, learn whether voters are parents or non-parents of school children. This also usually proves significant in a ballot outcome. The higher the number of parents, the better the ballot's chances. This and other information helps a future election planning group decide which groups of residents to solicit heavily for support before the next ballot. Together with the information from the post-election survey, it can help determine which issue to focus on in the next election.

If you consider these two steps the morning after you have your next election, it may help you avoid all of the "hangovers" that can follow a defeat.

Cass Franks

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MALL

"A Tapestry of Talents"

by Bob Freehan and Sandy Kus

Take 10,000 square feet of floor space in a regional shopping mall, mix in 30 display panels of student artwork, add continuous demonstrations of art, music, and vocational education talent, top with a special opening ceremony for school volunteers, and you have the formula for a successful "image building" special event. We call it a "Tapestry of Talent."

A special event in a mall doesn't (and shouldn't) just happen. It was part of our short and long range marketing plan for Warren Consolidated Schools. The plan requires any event to answer the "who, what, when, where, how and why" questions.

WHY:
Almost all of our district's 32 schools sponsor springtime art fairs and open houses. A single show would have great impact and would be attended by the general population rather than parents alone.

WHO:
Art and music teachers and their students from all grade levels, vocational education staff and students, and drama teachers and students all participated. Many general classroom teachers displayed their students' work. Honor society members monitored displays. We also chose this event to publicly honor our volunteers.

> *"A special event in a mall doesn't (and shouldn't) just happen."*

A concert presented by Sterling Heights High School Jazz Band was one of the 'Center Stage' attractions during Warren Community Schools' Tapestry of Talents at the Oakland Mall.

A proud father captures his son's artistic display on film at the Tapestry of Talents. This display of artwork was one of over 50 panels filled with students work throughout the mall.

Elementary children under the direction of teacher Jim Stogdill sang a medley of songs celebrating Michigan's 150th at Center Stage in Oakland Mall during the three-day Tapestry of Talents sponsored by WCS.

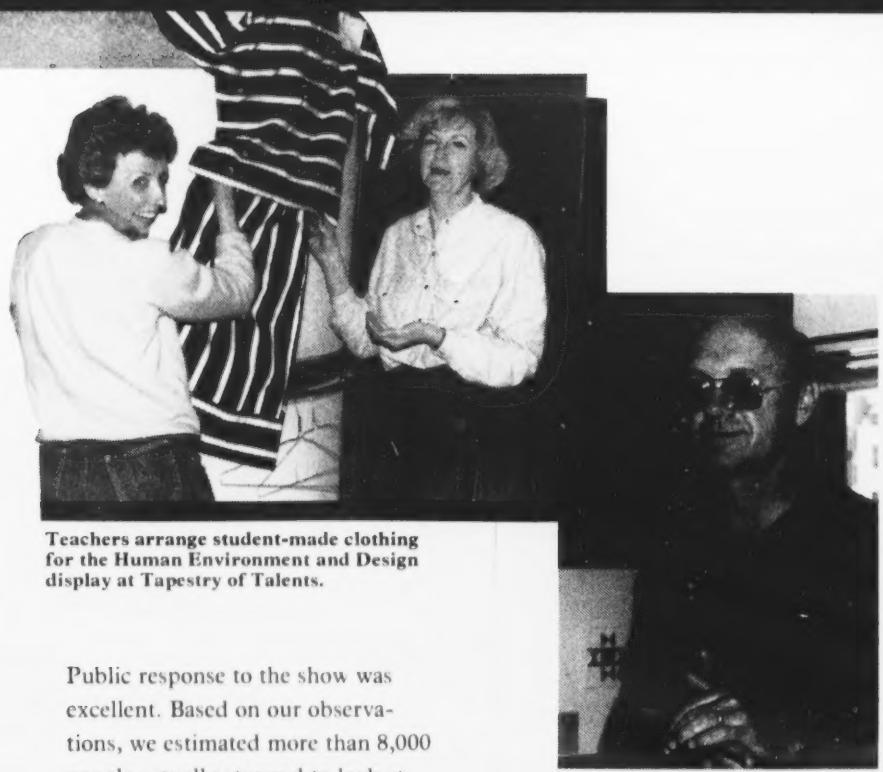
WHEN:
Anytime is ok, but springtime is a traditional time for school exhibits and is the "slow" shopping season.

WHERE:
It can happen at the mall near you!

WHAT:
We had 4'x8' artwork display panels, tables for two and three dimensional art, and a restaurant meeting room for our volunteer recognition. The mall's center stage area accommodated our band and chorus members. We printed a program and map with school district information.

Pat Venaleck, Gussom Jr. High art teacher and a student prepare one of the display boards for "Tapestry of Talents."

Students of floral design created flower arrangements in the mini flower shop at the mall during the three days of Tapestry of Talents. Teacher Delena Holces encouraged her students to donate corsages to many of the shoppers.



Teachers arrange student-made clothing for the Human Environment and Design display at Tapestry of Talents.

HOW:

We coordinated the dates with the mall management nine months in advance to get on their promotion and publicity schedule. The event was included in advertising, signs, and other promotional material inside and outside the mall.

We used the three months prior to the event to organize teacher/student demonstrations and volunteer staff members for set-up and take-down. Display panels were purchased and prepared centrally for delivery to the mall the afternoon before the event. Displays and tables were set up after the mall closed by art teachers and other volunteers. Tables and chairs were rented through the mall.

School volunteers were sent invitations for the reception two weeks in advance of the event. They had a continental breakfast, short "thank you" program and preview show at the mall between 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. on the first day.

Staff members and National Honor Society members volunteered time to walk around exhibit areas to monitor and answer public questions. They had badges identifying them and the school district.

Public response to the show was excellent. Based on our observations, we estimated more than 8,000 people actually stopped to look at one or more of the art displays. At least 3,000 viewed one of the student demonstrations or performances. More than 300 school volunteers attended the reception and opening ceremony.

Mall merchants indicated the displays and show were the best of any organization, public or commercial. Parents of students participating in the displays and demonstrations were more supportive of the district's other programs and at the polls during a millage vote one month later.

Bob Freehan

Sandy Kus

Robert Freehan has been Public Information Officer for Warren Consolidated Schools since 1979. He has a B.A. in Communication from Michigan State University and an M.B.A. with an emphasis in marketing and finance from the University of Detroit. He has been in the public relations profession since 1969 with schools, municipal government and the U.S. Air Force.

Sandy Kus is a teacher and Public Information Consultant with Warren Consolidated Schools. She graduated from Wayne State University with a major in English. She has taught elementary and junior high school since 1961 and became a part-time consultant in 1985. Kus is also the chairperson of the Warren Education Association PR Committee.

Staff Recruitment — as easy as...

1 2 3 ...&4!

by Robert Gaskill

Will your school district have to contend with a significant shortage of teachers in the near future? "Yes," according to a recent Carnegie report which notes that schools will need to hire 1.3 million new teachers by 1992 — a notion supported by studies completed by the Rand Corporation and the NEA "No," according to the National Center for Education Information which predicts that applications will exceed teacher vacancies by a 13-to-1 ratio this fall. While the supply/demand debate rages, a second challenge appears to be emerging — the need to gear up for top teacher candidates as an increasing number of districts implement plans for staff recruitment.

Interested in developing such a plan? Consider the following four-step process to minimize the potential impact of a teacher shortage and attract well qualified candidates:

STEP 1: Analysis
An initial assessment is critically important to plan development. Analysis focuses on three key questions:

1. What are our projected staffing needs?
2. What is the current status of our staff recruitment/hiring process?
3. Who will be responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating a plan for teacher recruitment?

District needs can be assessed systematically by scanning current staff data. Examine this information carefully. Note ages, years of experience, and areas of certification for every staff member. By employing the retirement provisions of P.A. 91, you should be able to clearly delin-

> *75% of administrators nationwide will be eligible for retirement within the next four years — positions which will frequently be filled by teachers.*

eate when staff members will be eligible for retirement.

Next, consider the number of part-time staff members and teachers remaining on lay-off. By examining numbers, ages, and qualifications of certified staff in both groups, you can begin to determine some specific future needs. In addition, consider an identical analysis of your administrative staff. According to Colorado-based consultant Jim Huge, 75% of administrators nationwide will be eligible for retirement within the next four years — positions which will frequently be filled by teachers.

Then consider enrollment projections. Use these figures to project overall staffing needs. Finally, reach an early consensus on an overall recruitment philosophy.

An analysis of the current program involves a critical review of a number of components including:

- **Application forms:** Do they adhere to existing laws and guidelines? Are they professional looking?
- **The interview process:** Who will be involved in interviewing? Who will have the final say in the selection process? Will initial inservicing be needed?
- **The current master agreement:** Do we need to shore up the lower end of the salary range? Do we want to remove early retirement incentives and/or build in incentives for extended service? Do we want to explore developing "creative" contract language that might expedite recruitment in hard-to-fill areas?

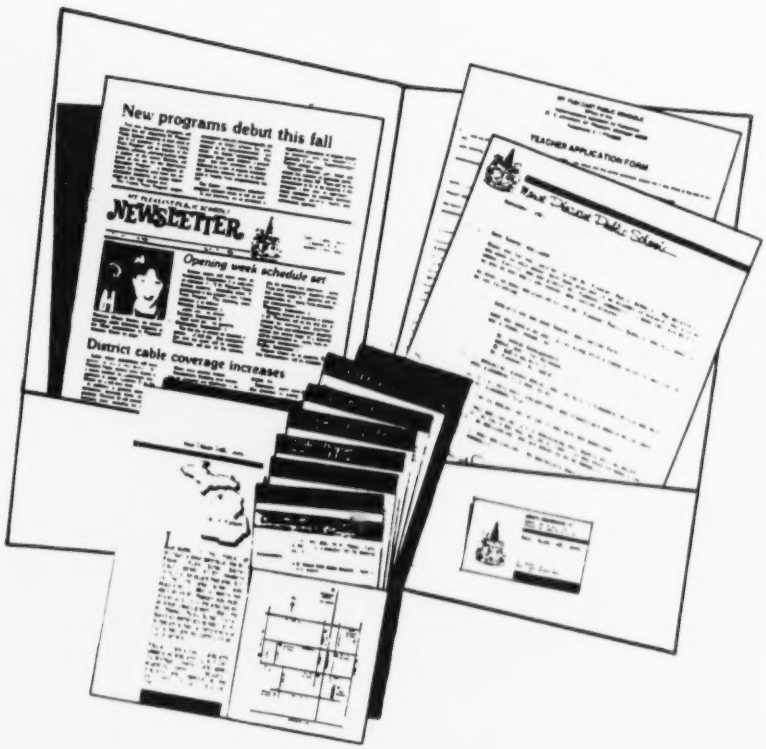
Analysis also involves determining who will devise, implement, and evaluate the specific recruitment plan. Potential team members include the director of personnel, a representative from a university placement office, the director of information services, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, and a current staff member.

STEP 2: Planning

Careful analysis really establishes the groundwork for subsequent planning. Key considerations in plan development include:

1. What will be our general course of action?
2. What are our key target dates?
3. What resources will be needed?
4. How will we evaluate the effectiveness of our recruitment plan?

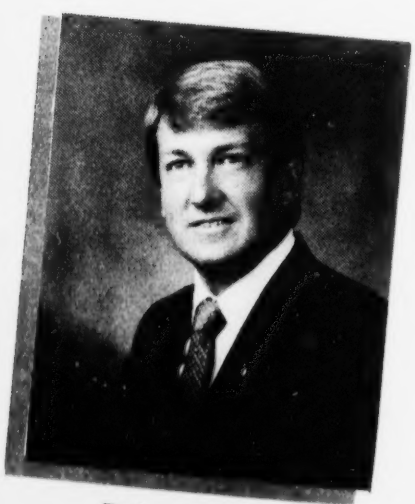
Answers to such questions lead to the formation of a specific plan of action.



STEP 3: Implementation and **STEP 4: Evaluation**
Implementation and evaluation are the final, critical components of the four-step process. Once a plan is in action, consider scheduling an occasional meeting to check progress and be prepared to make necessary adjustments. While a formal method of evaluation should have been determined during the planning stage, be attuned to informal sources of feedback as well. Above all, watch for significant changes in the educational marketplace. New laws or shifts in over-all enrollment patterns may trigger need for new analysis.

In Mt. Pleasant, this four-step process has led to the development of a plan that focuses specific attention on the posting, application, screening, interview, and selection processes, and entry-level procedures. In addition, a specific "recruitment packet" has been developed to support this effort. Each packet contains key components — a general information letter from the Director of Personnel, an application form, a district brochure, a *Mt. Pleasant — Someplace Special* community brochure, and the most recent edition of our district newsletter.

The bottom line is this — we now believe that we are in a far better position to cope successfully with tomorrow's staffing uncertainties. Are you?



Robert Gaskill

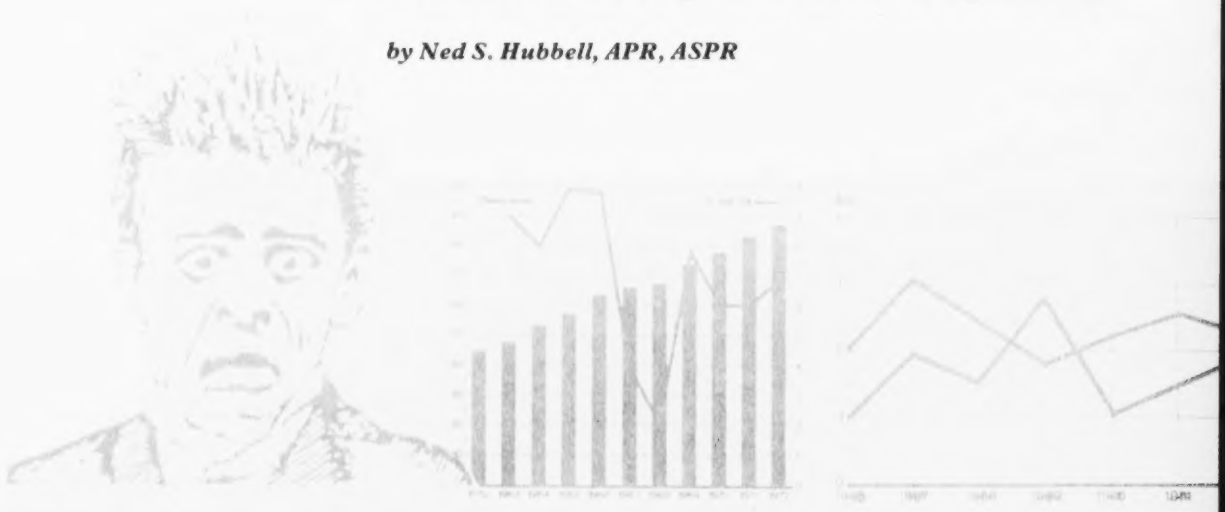
Robert Gaskill is the Administrative Assistant for Secondary Education for the Mt. Pleasant Public Schools. As such, he directs a number of programs, including the district's alternative services programs.

As a member of MSPRA's Executive Board, he has coordinated regional fall state-of-the-art conferences and been a presenter at several other state education association meetings.

He has undergraduate and graduate degrees from Central Michigan University and is currently completing his Ph.D. from Michigan State University in Curriculum and Instruction.

Research Conquers Mathophobia

by Ned S. Hubbell, APR, ASPR



Once upon a time, when you and I and the world were younger, my former superintendent asked me a question I had never been asked before.

Said he, "One of my board members asked me to describe just what the school district was getting for the money it spent on public relations."

So we set up a meeting for me to show him.

I came loaded with a newspaper-sized scrapbook of news clippings, copies of our annual report, report card inserts, parent handbooks and cleverly-written, nifty (I thought) brochures. I spread it all out before him and pointed out that all of this publicity — if strung end to end, would reach from his office, down the hall, down the stairs, out the back door and halfway down the block. And I'd still have enough left over to paper one and a half walls of his office!

> *The days of non-existent evaluation of public relations are over. Management wants data to show the effects of our efforts and they have a right to demand it.*

"That's swell," he said, "but how do I know if all this changed anybody's mind? How do we know if they feel better about their schools, knowing all this?"

I was stumped. I couldn't answer him because I didn't know if "all this" made any difference. Who's to say?

The days of non-existent evaluation of public relations are over. Management wants data to show the effects of our efforts and they have a right to demand it.

That's when I finally decided to practice the entire four steps of the four-part public relations process. All I had ever done was use my imagination (and some writing ability) to a.) plan, and b.) communicate. 'Twas about time, said I, to preface all that planning with some c.) research and after my year's efforts, d.) evaluate our effectiveness.

The late John Marston of MSU used to say that research was "planned, carefully organized, sophisticated fact-finding and listening to the opinions of others."

Research gives you input about the attitudes and expressed opinions of key publics. It's vital when done:

a.) at the onset of public relations planning

b.) to track your progress during a public relations campaign, or

c.) as a measuring tool after a public relations program is carried out.

In short, it provides you with practical input for programming, serves as an early warning system, helps you secure management support for your ideas and, most importantly, increases the effectiveness of communications.

Informal Research

Basically, there are two kinds of research — informal and formal. Informal research is the do-it-yourself type, a fact-gathering process that consists of reading and filing material that relates to your school district or organization. There are two basic types of informal fact-finding usually readily available to any public relations specialist.

Organizational Research examines useful background information about your organization, seeking to answer questions about:

1. History
2. Organizational Structure
3. Philosophy and Mission
4. Operational Policies
5. Competitive Posture
6. Trends Analysis

Archival Research examines information "on-the-record" for application to questions about: organization, publics, programs, communication, etc.

1. Organizational Files
2. Newspaper File
3. Clipping File
4. Mail/Telephone Log
5. Past Research
6. Data Bank Accessing
7. Standard Library Resources
8. Case Studies

Descriptive Research examines existing situations of public opinion and behavior, communication effects, demographic characteristics, media use, etc.

1. Depth Interviews, Observation
2. Content Analysis
3. Advisory Panels
4. Focus Group Interviews
5. Delphi Studies
6. Research Subscription Services
7. Omnibus, Piggyback or Shares Research
8. Contracted or Commissioned Research
9. U.S. Census Data Analysis
10. Audits

But it's the formal research that seems to frighten public relations professionals. PR specialists possess, it seems, a fear of numeric communication. Their familiarity with numbers is limited to receiving the business manager's annual financial report and disseminating it in a news release or taking the annual MEAP test score report and transferring it to newsletter copy. But by their own volition, public relations practitioners avoid mathematics.

Writer Sheila Tobias reports that math avoiders "may have learned but never liked the subject, preferring one like English where . . . there are so many right answers, not just one. Groping is an activity no normal person does well."

Writing in the *Public Relations Review* (winter, 1977), James E. Grunig said: "Public relations professionals are often more 'doers' than researchers. They know how to work with the media, produce employee publications, release financial information or supervise a community relations program. Public relations people say that public relations can increase . . . revenue and improve . . . public understanding.

Proving it, of course, requires measurement of the effects of public relations programs — and measurement requires research."

I suggest that public relations practitioners may overcome their mathophobia by more fully understanding probability sampling, sampling size, sampling error and reporting results of survey research.

Probability Sampling

Probability sampling is a technique in which each person in the population being studied has a known chance of becoming part of the sample. Probability sample estimates can be critiqued more precisely. It is possible to determine the extent to which sample findings differ from the results that could have been obtained from a census (counting every person in the population). Exact statistical statements about sample results can be made. And the probability sample allows inferences about population characteristics —it gives you specific knowledge about the accuracy of the estimate.

Sample Size

The desired size of a probability sample depends upon a number of factors, the least important of which is the size of the population. And population has little bearing on sample size whenever the sample size is less than 5% of the population. The more alike or homogeneous the population elements are in regard to the characteristic being studied, the smaller the sample required for a given sampling error and confidence level.

For example, for no less than 95 out of 100 samples, allowing for a 5% sampling error, the following population/sampling size ratios would apply:

Population	Sampling Size
Infinity	384
500,000	384
100,000	383
50,000	381
10,000	370
5,000	357
3,000	341
2,000	322
1,000	278

That confidence level of 95 indicates, in other words, that for 95% of all samples of a specified size, the sample results would correspond with the population results, given the 5% sampling error that comes from sampling instead of studying the entire population. (See Appendix A for a sample size guide, based on 95%/+5%).

The desired sample size is also determined by the type of sampling procedure used; time, money and personnel; and the number of categories by which the data will be analyzed.

The most common type of probability sample is the simple random sample. But, for ease in sample selection, consider instead of using systematic random sampling methods. If you want to poll from your registered voter records, for example, divide the sample size into the total population. That gives you

the "nth," or selection interval. Use the table of random numbers to enter the voter list at random, the number randomly selected is the voter number you start with; then draw every nth one after that until the total sample size is achieved. Oversampling through the same process enables you to have a list of backup, substitute voters to use in the event some respondents refuse to participate in the study.

Statisticians have calculated the size of sampling error associated with given sample sizes and various levels of confidence. For example, a sample size of 50 means there is a risk of being 13.9% from the results that would be obtained from a total census. This error rate would hold true regardless of the population size. A sample size of 1,067 for any size population has an error rate of 3%; 800 in the sample provides an error rate of 3.5%, while a sample size of 600 leaves an error rate of 4%.

BEST METHODOLOGY

A major decision that has to be made in opinion research is which method of data collection to use — written questionnaire, telephone interview or personal interview. Appendix B illustrates in summary form the advantages and disadvantages of each methodology.

The great weakness with mail-out, mail-back questionnaires is the very poor rate of return. And those that are returned constitute a self-selected sample — those who chose to return the questionnaire.

We wanted to get readers' opinions of our monthly publication, *Michigan Education Report*. Rather than send out questionnaires to superintendents and principals, we had five experienced interviewers do all 400 interviews in four days. (It took one secretary six very long days to look up all the telephone numbers!) But we bagged 100% of our sample of 400 interviews in a statewide survey! That's why nearly all of the 150 school district opinion surveys conducted with the help of Project Outreach of the Michigan Department of Education are conducted through telephone interviewing. It's quicker! And you can supervise the interviewers.

The public relations specialist, whether conducting his or her own opinion research or monitoring the research conducted by others, must be concerned with the questions of sampling, sample size, sampling error, methodology and reporting the results of survey research.

Focusing on these few decision points of the research process allows the mathophobic public relations practitioner to begin conducting and evaluating public relations research.

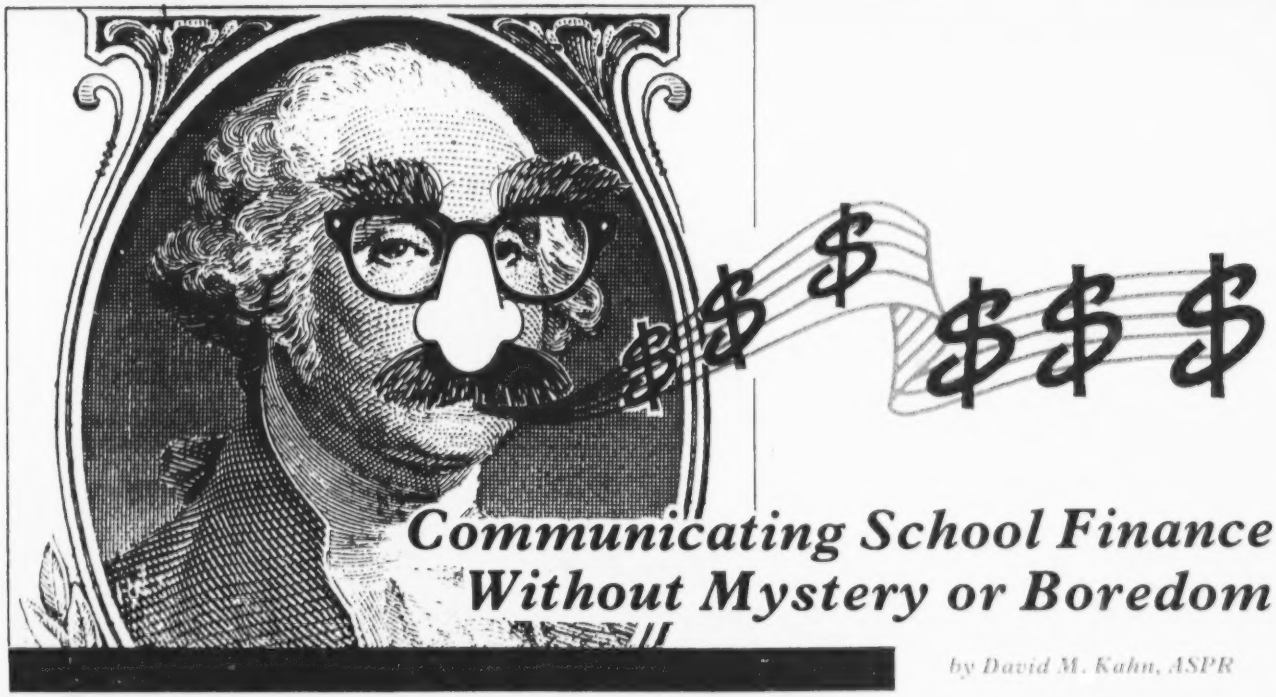
Wouldn't you say it's about time?

Ned S. Hubbell

Ned S. Hubbell, APR, is Acting Assistant Superintendent for Public Affairs, Michigan Department of Education. He is responsible for mass media relations of MDE and the Michigan State Board of Education. In addition, he supervises preparation of all department publications and directs the State Board's "Project Outreach", a statewide public relations effort of the state educational agency designed to assist local school districts. In 1983, "Outreach" was awarded the NSPRA Gold Medallion Award — the first presented to a state educational agency.

Prior to this, Ned was founder and president of the nation's first public relations and opinion research firm that specialized in school public relations. The practical communication techniques he pioneered lead many to consider him "Mr. School PR".

He was one of the founders and an early president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA). Also a member of the Public Relations Society of America, he is Accredited (APR) by that Society and (ASPR) by the National School Public Relations Association. He holds an undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and a Master of Arts degree from Wayne State University.



Communicating School Finance Without Mystery or Boredom

by David M. Kahn, ASPR

Many factors affect the financing of schools in our state. The one thing we must all keep in mind when we talk about money issues is "Schools are about kids, not money!" Because school finance is so complex, it is easy to get lost in all the figures. When communicating with your community on financial issues, remember to relate each item to the program or service it provides for students.

The major goal of school districts in Michigan can be simply stated: Provide the best quality programs to educate every child to his or her full potential with the available resources. Some of the tasks involved in accomplishing this goal, however, are not so simply stated.

Start by changing your budget to a fiscal plan. Most people are familiar with the fixed and rigid budget they have in their households. School budgets change regularly during the course of the year and should be viewed more as fiscal policy rather than permanent barriers. Calling it a fiscal plan may help draw the distinction.

What have you done to be fiscally responsible? Schools have been tightening their belts for several years now. Have you implemented an energy conservation program; placed controls on equipment purchases; started a group purchasing program with other local districts? Although reluctantly, have you reduced programs and staff? Demonstrate your fiscal responsibility by identifying these areas in which you have spent money wisely in the past. This will go a long way to build trust and credibility in your fiscal plan.

What are the uncontrollable costs in your fiscal plan? First, let's look at declining enrollment. It would seem logical that if you have fewer students you spend less money. Closer examination tells us that if you have a building that holds five hundred students, and you lose fifty of them, it won't cost you any less to provide heat, lights, electricity, insurance, or gas or oil for the buses. Most likely, the students were from different grade levels and you won't be able to reduce staff either. Inflation and its effect on essential purchases is another uncontrollable cost. Even with efforts in group purchasing, the cost of paper, pencils, books and other items essential to learning has continued to rise.

Schools are in the people business. The most obvious cost is, of course, personnel. All of our teachers, bus drivers, cooks, secretaries, administrators, and other employees spend their days with our most precious resource, our children. They deserve a fair and equitable wage. Like most businesses, schools negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with employees. Once this is done, salaries are a fixed cost.

Schools must project funding based on many variables. In our home budgets, most of us are aware of what our income will be for the coming year. That is not necessarily so in school district fiscal plans. Schools generally begin to project funding for the next year sometime in February or March.

Some of the variables they must project include:

- The value of property tax in the district (SEV)
- The tax limitation amendment effect (Headlee rollback)
- The state aid formula
- Percent and level of categorical aid for special education, transportation, and much more
- Enrollment
- Interest rates
- Funding of state and federal programs
- Potential executive order cuts
- Emergency repairs and/or equipment replacement

If any one of these varies from your projection, your funding level will change. A student can be ninety-eight percent correct in a high school class and get an "A", but if you are ninety-eight percent right on a multi-million dollar budget, you're in a heap of trouble! The task of balancing fixed and controllable costs with variables in revenues and expenditures is a difficult one.

David M. Kahn

"When communicating with your community on financial issues, remember to relate each item to the program or service it provides for students."

You can demonstrate the cost of education in your community is the best bargain around. Take your per year/per student cost and divide it by 900 hours and then by 180 days. If the average school district in the state spends $2,800 per year per student, that means it costs only $3.11 an hour or $15.55 a day. What do we get for that meager sum? We get a professional staff of teachers and administrators, books, paper, pencils, a building with heat, lights, and electricity, transportation, school lunches and much more — all this for less than the minimum hourly wage.

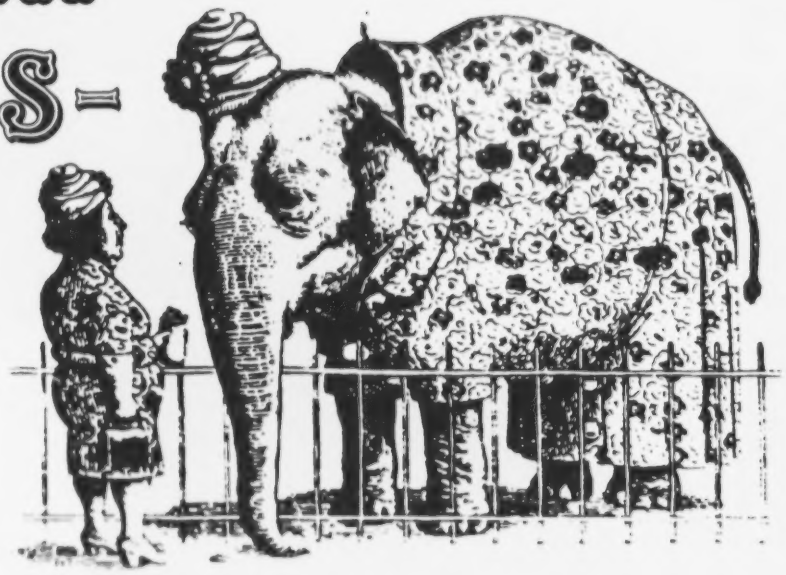
When you make your plans to communicate your finances, build in as many face-to-face opportunities as possible. Using paper methods to communicate this message is important and should not be discounted, but keep in mind paper methods will generally reinforce beliefs already held. It's the face-to-face methods that will change some attitudes.

You may notice this article lacks the typical explanations of state aid, circuit breaker, and other financial mysteries of school finance in Michigan. This has been done purposefully. Communicating these tends to confuse not clarify. We can't continue to try to make our citizens into school business officials if we want to increase support for our schools. It is my contention we can garner a great deal more support by communicating confidence in our abilities and trust in our judgement to spend taxpayers' money in the best interest of our children.

David M. Kahn is Associate Executive Director of Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA), and Executive Director for Michigan Institute for Educational Management (MIEM). In these capacities, his duties include providing consultant services on finance and other subjects for local school districts.

He is a past-president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA) and is Accredited in School Public Relations (ASPR) by the National School Public Relations Association. Kahn holds a B.A. from Wayne State University and an M.A. from Saginaw Valley State College

CHEAP FRILLS—



Inexpensive Ways to Dress Up Your School PR Program

by Lois Lange

Good school communications programs do cost money. But, as in life, often the best things in school PR are free, or close to it.

Let's say you have spent most of your modest PR budget on some basic informational items — regularly published staff and community newsletters, surveys, brochures, and flyers. Let's assume you use face-to-face communication to extend the flow of accurate information and obtain input. And, of course, you are conscientious about getting your news to all of the local media.

Once you've covered those basics, it's time to design some "cheap frills" for your program — low cost activities to stretch your PR dollar, and your program's effectiveness.

Operate on the theory that "to know us is to love us." Keep the educational process and the efforts and achievements of students and staff before the community. The community, made up as it is of caring, perceptive people who were once schoolchildren, will respond in an appreciative, positive manner.

Create your own special event. Hold a "school pride week." Ask your mayor and school board to issue special proclamations. Take samples of your students' schoolwork downtown or into the mall. Display them proudly in store windows and be sure to identify each display with the names of the school district, school, teacher, and student. Ask business persons with letterboards to display a special "school pride" message during your special week. You might want to select that same week to invite community members into the schools for special events, such as a special program or an opportunity for parents or grandparents to lunch with the students. Let the students write the invitations.

Provide placemats to local restaurants. On the placemats feature pictures of children engaged in learning activities and listings of some of your "reasons for pride" — awards, honors, new programs. They can be very low in cost if you can get the restaurants to contribute toward their printing. Or perhaps your local printer will give you a discount in exchange for a little advertising on the placemat.

Piggy-back on local events. Your schools and students can share the community limelight and the fun, and it doesn't cost a cent. Every community has its local traditions and festivities. Offer to coordinate a theme-related

Good school communications programs do cost money. But, as in life, often the best things in school PR are free, or close to it.

activity in the schools. When Howell held its holiday Fantasy of Lights, students in all grades participated in related essay and art contests. Winners rode in the parade and winning entries were featured in the school district newsletter. The results? The community organizers were pleased at the added publicity and participation. The schools shared in the community spirit and attention generated by the event. Most communities will be eager for schools to participate in their special events IF they know someone from the schools will act as coordinator. (That's you!)

Don't forget about radio. If you have a local radio station — one that broadcasts your school closings and maybe even your lunch menus — it may be very helpful in getting out your good news, especially during special events. If you schedule a "pride week" like the one suggested earlier, or observe a special occasion such as American Education Week, consider involving your local radio station.

A highlight of your "pride week," for example, could be a series of short radio spots, recorded by selected students, teachers, and principals, in which each participant delivers a one or two sentence statement about his or her special reasons for school pride.

Once, for Michigan Teachers' Day, the Howell radio station worked with the schools to produce a county-wide salute to teachers. Forms were sent to all schools in the county and students were asked to complete them. The forms asked the students' name, grade, school, favorite teacher, and what made the teacher a favorite. Each school collected the forms and mailed them to the radio station. Radio personalities read them as a salute to teachers throughout the week. The station staff probably won't come to you and ask you to do something like this. Go to them, suggest it, and do the legwork. It's worth it.

Reach those senior citizens. Offer to match up senior citizens groups with teachers whose students have programs they would like to perform. It's a good experience for everyone involved and it reminds the seniors, long out of school, how wonderful our system of education really is!

If your school district sponsors, provides space for, or is somehow affiliated with a senior citizen group, you can probably offer to assist with its newsletter. Chances are, if you offer to write and edit items and announcements they submit, they'll allow you to include a few "school" stories. It's a great way to reach non-parents, and seniors seem to have time to read.

Try a Graduate Guarantee. If you already have an adult education program, you can offer a graduate guarantee for very little added cost. Howell's guarantee, which gained international acclaim, was mailed to area businesses and stated: "If you hire a 1987 graduate of Howell High School and find that he or she lacks the basic skills in reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic needed to learn and perform satisfactorily on the job, we'll take that graduate back." Employers were instructed to notify the superintendent of their dissatisfaction so the graduate could be contacted and offered additional free coursework. The results: The business community applauded it. The media raved about it. Parents were proud. The students felt special. And, so far, not one graduate has returned for further training. But if one does, that will no doubt also prove beneficial.

Lois Lange

Help teachers report the good news. I use something I call "Positive Postcards." They are probably cheaper, and definitely more attractive than those time-honored, but often tattered happygrams. Use a clip art, cartoon figure on the front left of the postcards. Add an upbeat caption on the front right and leave room beneath the caption for a personal "good news" message from the teacher. Print the school's return address under the words "Good news from..." on the back. Teachers need only write a short message, address the card, and drop it in the mail. Sheer convenience and availability make them popular among teachers. With parents, its the message that counts.

School districts all over the nation are using low cost ideas like these to enhance public awareness of their schools. If you have a favorite low-cost PR project, MSPRA would like to know about it and share it with others. Send your ideas to MSPRA, 421 W. Kalamazoo, Lansing, MI 48933.

Lois A. Lange is the Communications Specialist in Walled Lake Consolidated Schools. She served as Communications Specialist in Howell Public Schools from 1981-1987. In a district that had no regular program of communication and a minimal communications budget, she began by establishing employee and community newsletters and later added media relations, special school-community events, surveys, and other activities to round out the program.

Her publications have regularly won honors from MSPRA and she was project director for the 1985 NSPRA award-winning videotape, "Mission Possible: Quest for Excellence."

Lange currently acts as chairperson of MSPRA's annual communications contest and is a member of MSPRA's Executive Board.

Are You A Part Of The Cable Revolution?

by Jane McKinney, ASPR

School use of cable television has come a long way in 10 years.

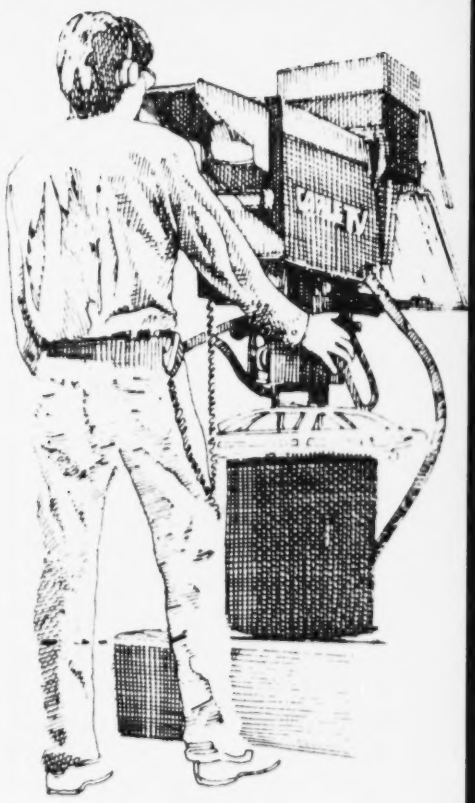
In the summer of 1977, the National School Public Relations Association presented its first session on the subject at its annual seminar. Six people were in the audience. At last summer's seminar, NSPRA offered three cable-related sessions and capacity crowds attended all of them.

What used to be unique is now almost commonplace. Most communities have cable systems and school districts are seeing that cable TV is here to stay. A great many are using this tremendous communications tool in a variety of creative and effective ways.

However, there are still school districts using it only minimally or not at all. They don't know it's available . . . are scared away by cost . . . anxious about who will staff it . . . bewildered about how to use it . . . and wonder if it's worth all the effort anyway.

> *"When 95% of respondents to a community survey tell you the school district's cable TV channel is one of the most reliable sources of school information — it's worth the effort."*

Availability. If cable TV was in your area prior to 1979 (when the Supreme Court struck down requirements for access channels) or if you are in a prime cable location, your franchise probably provides schools with access to a channel. It could also provide equipment and personnel. Check with the cable company manager; ask to see a copy of the franchise; talk with local government officials. Push for any benefits the franchise provides for schools. If there aren't any, work with local government officials to include schools in the negotiations for franchise renewal.



Cable-related action taken by Congress in 1984 could affect schools adversely. As a result of this legislation, (1) it is harder to negotiate for an access channel, (2) if you have been awarded a channel and aren't using it, the cable company could reclaim it, (3) if the cable company can prove financial hardship, it can withdraw benefits promised in the franchise, and (4) local governmental agencies are no longer required to use a percentage of subscription fees for cable-related purposes.

Cost. Search for outside help from: cable company commitments in the franchise; the local cable commission; State Department of Education; national and state councils of the arts; parent organizations; civic clubs; local commercial television companies.

START SMALL, PLAN BIG. Build your cable operation in three stages over whatever period of time finances dictate. First, a character generator, monitor and modulator (about $5,000). Second, portable videotape recorder, camera, editor, and time base corrector (about $12,000). Third, full color studio with a minimum of two cameras, switcher, cables, lights, microphones, audiomixer, recorder (about $20,000).

Staff. Someone who knows what's going on in the schools should be responsible for the character generator. Someone trained in TV production should oversee programming. A high school television class with a skilled, enthusiastic teacher is a rich source of programming. Encourage other teachers and students to become involved; use interns from nearby colleges or universities; train community volunteers. Behind it all, you need an administrator with vision and clout to make it happen.

Use. Cable TV is effective for information, instruction, inservice, and internal communication.

The information messages transmitted by the character generator onto the TV screen provide a school district with direct, instant continual communication with the public. Use the CG correctly and people will come to depend upon it as the first and most reliable source of school news. With programming, START SMALL, PLAN BIG. Videotape the camera-ready activities that take place in every school district: programs, plays, assemblies. As your equipment and expertise grow, you can move into more complicated programming. Surveys show people want to see kids, board of education meetings, curriculum, special events (including athletics), and school issues — in that order.

Instructional possibilities for cable TV have increased in Michigan with the M-STAR project. In its fourth year of funding by the State Department of Education, M-STAR has purchased rights to instructional programming on Central Education Network. The programs are available to every school district in the state via satellite or taped programs are available through the Regional Educational Media Center (REMC). The centers also have teacher guides available. To help you get started, contact the Birmingham Public Schools for a copy of a handout on ITV implementation published as part of a state-funded grant.

Cable TV is a natural for providing adult education courses, for both enrichment and college or high school credit.

CHECKING THE SOUND SYSTEM. Making sure the mikes are on properly and that voices are coming across evenly. This requires a good deal of adjustment on the controls because everyone's voice has different degrees of loudness and pitch.

CHECKING THE SPECIAL EFFECTS SYSTEM. Through this piece of equipment the director determines the camera to record, do fade outs and ins, etc.

CHECKING CAMERA RECEPTION. We use three cameras. This check is to make sure they're working properly and that the camera person understands the cues of the director. The director keeps in constant communication with the camera operators through earphones and mikes.

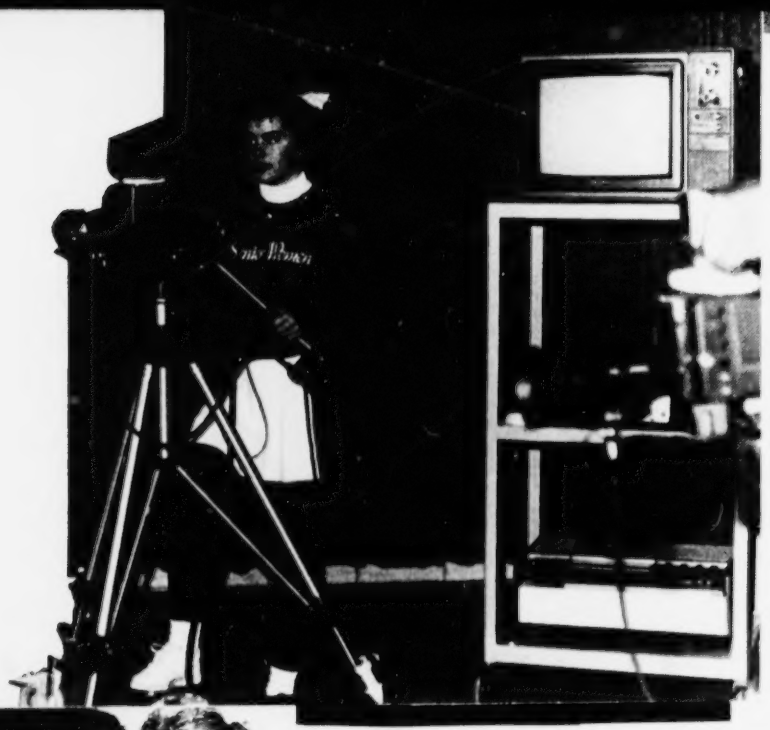
An exciting instructional use involves interactive television. There are several projects around the state in either their first or second year. Visit a project site, like the one in Jackson County, and you will see this is an exciting way to provide students with courses that might otherwise be denied them.

The Latin class in Vandercook Lake High School has only six students — not enough to warrant hiring a teacher. But those students are taking Latin via interactive TV. An instructor at Jackson High School teaches students in four high schools with classes as small or smaller than that at Vandercook Lake.

The project headed by Gerry Lang, REMC Director at Jackson Intermediate School District, will eventually include 15 high schools, Jackson Community College, and the ISD. In addition to Latin, the project will offer college prep economics, French, advanced science and introduction to agriculture.

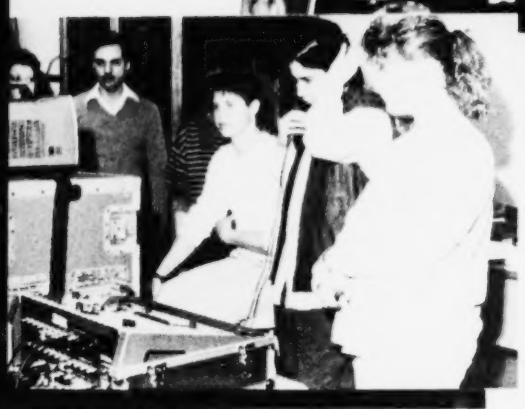
CHECKING OUT THE "TALENT". The people on camera must have their scripts ready (they've actually memorized them, but don't act like it), understand the cues from the camera operators (which are all hand signals), know the order they are on camera, etc.

EVERYTHING IS GO. The director gives the cue to the camera operators who cue the talent.



ON CAMERA. There are three cameras. Operators take direction through the earphones from the director in the control room.

Worth the Effort. When 95% of respondents to a community survey tell you the school district's cable TV channel is one of the most reliable sources of school information — it's worth the effort. When high school students gain poise and confidence along with writing, speaking, organizational and TV technical skills — it's worth the effort. When teachers get excited about an inservice session — it's worth the effort. I've seen these things happen. You can too.



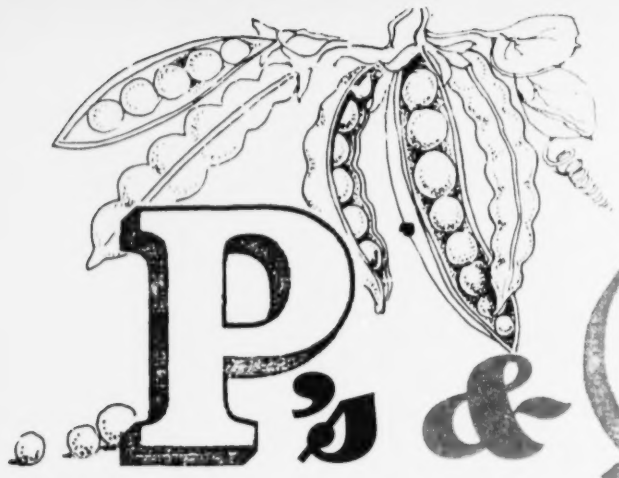
TAPE IS ROLLING. The program is taped for showing the next week over Cable Channel 24.

For more conventional use, you can develop an inservice library by videotaping guest speakers; encouraging staff members to share on videotape what they've learned at conferences and on sabbatical leave; exchanging videotapes with other school districts; purchasing, renting or producing relevant videotapes.

Interactive television can enhance internal communication. Information, such as the superintendent's annual message, can go live or taped while staff members meet in their individual buildings. A high school math class can include gifted middle school students without the middle schoolers leaving their building. An inservice session can originate in one building and be viewed district-wide.

Jane McKinney

Jane McKinney, ANPR, Director of Public Information for East Lansing Public Schools, is considered a pioneer in school use of cable television. She is the author of a book "Schools and the Cable Revolution" which has been distributed nationally and will soon be translated into Finnish by the Finnish Institute of Recorded Sound in Helsinki. She has written a number of articles and spoken widely on the subject. A member of the East Lansing Cable Communications Commission and the National School Public Relations Association's technology committee, she formerly served on the Michigan Department of Education's technology committee and was president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association.



P's & Q's of Publication Quality

by Hilary Nault

As with everything else, communication is the key in producing quality publications — communication with your target audience and communication to and from the people involved in the actual production of the publication.

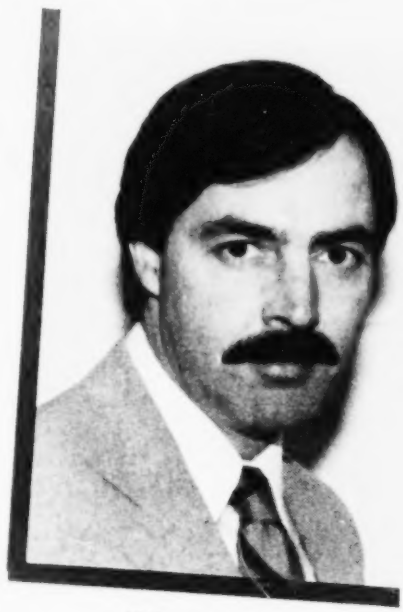
Make sure you understand the specific purpose of your publication, its intended audience, and the ability of your audience to perceive the message. If you do not have experience working with printers, you will need to do some homework on printing techniques and terms. A handy reference for beginners is the *Pocket Pal,* produced by the International Paper Company, 77 W. 4th Street, New York, New York, 10036, (212) 431-5222. This publication costs only $3.25 and is a real help in communicating with those in the print industry.

Before you go to press, you should have a completed manuscript (a typewritten, double-spaced version of your copy), an idea of the size and design of your publication, and a feel for the budget.

Manuscripts should be edited thoroughly to be concise, focused, and appropriate for your audience. Use the KISS rule: **K**eep **I**t **S**hort and **S**weet. Remember, the more you write, the less they'll read.

The rough copy should be proofed, proofed, and proofed again, to eliminate costly and embarrassing errors. If possible, you should pretest your copy to determine if readers will clearly understand the intended messages.

In considering size, you should know mailing requirements and costs. The post office can provide you with all necessary information. You should also consider how the publication will be used by your intended audience. Will it be stored for future reference? Will it be displayed on a wall or refrigerator? Don't skimp on the size of the publication at the expense of white space. Give the copy and artwork breathing room to enhance its appeal and the chance that it will actually be read.



Hilary Nault

Long before you approach a printer, you should determine which art and design elements will be used. Consider photos, line art provided by a commercial clip art service, and student art. How will these elements coexist and add impact and appeal to the copy?

Even if your printer has someone on staff who is skilled in graphic design and layout, you should at least provide the artist with a rough "thumbnail" sketch of each page.

You may want to consider hiring a graphic artist. These professionals charge either by the hour or by the project. I caution you, however, that creative people love to create. Make sure there is a clear understanding about cost constraints or you may get more than you wanted.

You may want your copy to be typeset by a professional. Desktop publishing equipment, coupled with a laser printer, can be used for many projects, but these provide thinner lettering than professional equipment. It may make extensive copy on a single page look gray and lacking in contrast, inhibiting readability and appeal. When weighing these two options, be sure to also weigh the costs in terms of in-house staff hours for typesetting and layout compared to the cost of commercial services.

In choosing a print shop, choose a full-service printer. They provide typesetting, keylining, printing and mailing. This will eliminate confusion, error, and delay. Make sure you and your printer have a clear understanding concerning costs and deadline requirements. Don't be afraid to ask and re-ask questions.

> ***"Use the KISS rule: Keep It Short and Sweet. Remember, the more you write the less they'll read."***

It is also very important to be certain the printer has the experience and equipment to handle your job. Ask for samples of previous work similar to your own. If there are several printers in your area, and time permits, seek bids on large projects. This will give you excellent information on costs, level of services, and quality of finished product. Be sure to consider each of these three factors in making your final decision.

Remember that content, readability and appearance go hand in hand in producing a quality publication. Each of these elements require several steps and considerable coordination and effort. Making that effort and communicating needs and goals for your publication BEFORE you go to press are keys to success.

Camera — A large photographic negative is taken of each page and "stripped" together with other pages for placement on the press plates.

Dylux or silver print — This photographic replica of the finished project, without colors, is taken from the "flats" produced in the camera stage. The dylux allows you to check for quality of reproduced photographs, final placement of copy and design elements, potential smudges or other impurities, soft spots in copy or photos, etc. Typos and other mistakes can be changed at this stage, but at a dramatically higher price. A dylux is an optional step which adds to the expense, but it is well worth it.

Galley Proofs — Sheets of copy returned by the typesetter to allow you to check design and to correct errors. Your changes are charged as author alterations.

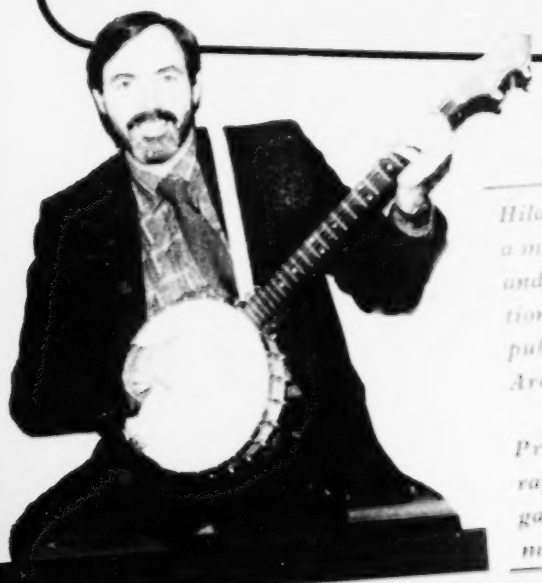
Manuscript — A rough, typewritten version of your copy which has been edited and proofed, used by the typesetter to produce your copy.

Page Proofs — These page proofs are similar to the waxed page proofs, but the sample pages are copy machine reproductions and the elements cannot be moved. You may note any changes directly on the page.

Photo separations and screening — Color photographs are separated by primary colors (a costly process), while black and white photos are sized and prepared for the printing process. This step is why it is important to provide black and white photos for black and white printed reproductions.

Printing, cutting, stitch and trim — The publication is printed, cut to rough page size, bound and trimmed.

Waxed page proofs — Some companies provide these page proofs showing placement of page design elements. Each element is lightly "glued" to the page to allow you to pull it off and move them to indicate corrections or revisions. Copy that doesn't fit must be edited with surplus copy charged to your bill as "overset." This is also another chance to correct typos or other errors, although content changes at this stage add to the cost and delay the finished product.



Hilary Nault

Hilary Nault is managing editor of the Michigan School Board Journal, a monthly publication sent to 9,000 school board members, educators and others. He is president-elect of the Michigan School Public Relations Association, and is a recipient of the Association's commendable publications award for a project completed while with the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District.

Prior to entering school public relations, Nault was a reporter, photographer, and television and radio news editor in northern lower Michigan. He has written extensively for newspapers as well as broadcast media.

STOKING THE FIRES:
Building staff morale

by Joanna Schultz, ASPR

Staff morale is a hot topic for many school administrators today. And no wonder, as the average teacher in Michigan is now over forty with about twenty years of teaching experience. That's a long time in one job! Long enough to face the possibilities of "burn-out," "stale out," or the alltime cop-out of "coasting" uneventfully to retirement.

Stoking the fires of staff morale requires some serious thought, well-conceived plans, and lots of patience, for decaying morale, like a dying fire takes time to reignite. I have classified the steps to improve employee morale or "internal PR" as it is sometimes called, into five general categories.

1. Determining the need

Before you can address any problem, you have to be able to define it. A good mechanism for defining a problem is the survey. Various professional associations including the National School Public Relations Association can provide assistance in choosing a staff survey to fit your needs. A good survey will tell you which aspects of employment are most valued by your staff and which areas present problems. After your survey is completed, you need to do two things. First, you need to report the results to the group that was surveyed. Second, you and your staff need to devise a plan to address the problems the survey has identified. Your staff needs to know the results of their survey are important to you — important enough to report and address.

> *Stoking the fires of staff morale requires some serious thought, well-conceived plans, and lots of patience, for decaying morale, like a dying fire takes time to reignite.*

2. Explaining employment practices

Employees should always be told about district personnel policies and practices. This "telling" should include:

- published, up-to-date handbooks distributed to all employees;
- posted copies of all newly proposed and adopted school board policies in employee lounges, and;
- inservice of all new employees about employee practices, as well as district philosophy and goals.

As a general rule, employees should also be told about all new district projects and programs before outsiders are told.

3. Involving employees in decision-making

Staff advisory committees can help determine the direction of curriculum, textbook selection, employment practices, community relations, discipline practices, and many other important programs. Advisory committees, however, must have legitimacy. Let your advisory committee members know their work will be considered and that action will be taken. Be sure, too, that your advisory committee is representative of all interested employee groups.

Employees should also be involved, usually on a representative basis, in a regular process for setting goals for their district.

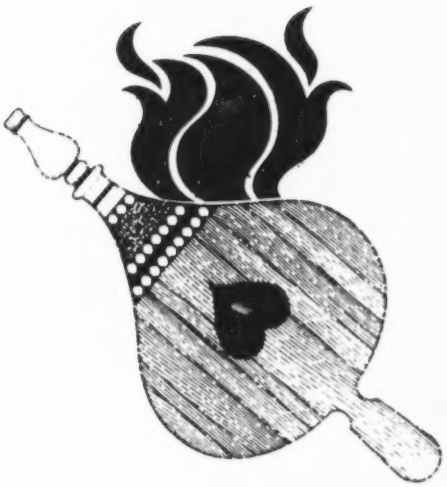
Joanna Schultz

4. Recognizing and rewarding employees

Employees appreciate formal recognition for both special efforts and overall job performance. An annual ceremony with much fanfare and press coverage is one way. Inservicing supervisors on how to reinforce positive job performances will also help build a positive climate.

5. Communicating state, national and local education trends to school employees

A school district should be a good source of education news for its employees. A short, snappy employee newsletter is one effective way to build a pipeline to employees. Many Michigan school districts publish an employee newsletter on the back of their board of education meeting summary.



An employee newsletter can include quick facts on demographics, new classroom projects, and education trends, as well as providing a vehicle for some of that all-important staff recognition.

These are just a few "ignition points" to help you light the fires of staff morale. Once the fires are burning, they'll need to be stoked. You can do that with continuous care and attention and an occasional fresh idea.

Joanna Schultz is current president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association. She is a freelance communications consultant, specializing in school-community relations, and a nine-year veteran of the Lenawee Intermediate School District, where she directed the district's public relations program.

While at Lenawee ISD, she won the National School Public Relations Association publications award for the Lenawee ISD newsletter, "Chalk Talk" in 1986, the NSPRA Golden Achievement Award for marketing Adult Education in 1986 and the NSPRA Gold Medallion Award for Vocational Education marketing in 1987. Schultz is one of ninety-five school public relations practitioners in the United States to earn accreditation in school public relations from the National School Public Relations Association.

Let Realtors Know:

Good Schools Sell Homes

by Kenson Siver

There is no question that real estate brokers, their sales staffs and customers are an important audience in school district public relations. The truth is that schools are the single most important factor in a family's choice of one community over another when they are looking for a new home. In a major survey the answer "GOOD SCHOOLS" ranked second only to "better neighborhood" when home buyers were asked why they had selected their new home. Another source noted that client questions on schools were second only to those of price. Yet this is an avenue for marketing schools that is under-used by many districts. Usually, school/realty contacts are limited to the distribution of school attendance area maps and other print materials (newsletters, school information sheets, etc.).

While these efforts are constructive, they are limited. In truth, I'm afraid we would find that many print materials go unread or only partially read, by those for whom they are intended. Public schools need to do more with the people who are selling the community to illustrate the quality of the local schools and the diversity of district services and programs . . . especially in light of recent increased real estate activity.

In a major survey the answer "GOOD SCHOOLS" ranked second only to "better neighborhood" when home buyers were asked why they had selected their new home.

It is time for more aggressive measures.

Try a "see for yourself" or "on-site visitation" program for people in the local real estate industry. Suggestions for your school realty program include:

1. Sponsor a series of meetings spread throughout the course of the school year, each at a different school location.
   a. Limit meetings to 45/90 minutes — light breakfast or lunch — mornings are a good time as it is less likely to interfere with business.
   b. Involve local realty companies or the Board of Realtors in planning the event, invitations and the agenda.
   ASK: What do realtors want to know about the local schools? What do they need

to know so they are better prepared to sell a house in the community? If they don't know, tell them. (See Appendix C)

c. The meeting should present a broad overview of the school system and focus on specific school concerns.

d. Have school administrators, parents and students on hand to speak briefly and conduct a building tour. Realtors appreciate hearing student and parent views.

e. Include an "active" building tour with stops at those programs/facilities/classes you want to showcase.

f. Include handouts and information on how to get additional copies of your materials.

g. Depending on the size of the school district, open the meetings to all real estate people serving the area or limit it to one or two offices at a time.

2. Tours of various school locations (community drive-throughs) should be optionally included, as they may not be the best use of the audience's limited time. (The tours may be of greater interest to sales staff new to the area.)

3. AN ALTERNATIVE: Each company regularly conducts sales meetings. Rather than holding their meeting at the realty office, invite the sales staff to a school building and include a school presentation and tour as part of their meeting's agenda.

4. Working in cooperation with the Board of Realtors, the intermediate school district and other districts in the area, explore the possibility of placing school district information in the real estate multiple listing guide on the community data sheet and in other Board of Realtors' publications. In most locations, local realty offices place their listings in a "Homes Magazine." See if they will accept school information even if it has to be placed on a rotation basis with other districts.

5. Continue to supply realty offices with school print materials, and, don't overlook video.

6. Meet informally or phone office managers to keep the lines of communication open and to keep the local schools on their agendas.

Aggressive marketing of schools will not be easy. The real estate industry has many part-time employees and turnover is high. As in every profession, there are those who are more conscientious about their work and want to know all aspects of the business (including the community life and schools) and those who are solely interested in a quick monetary return. And, there are those brokers who will encourage their staff to learn about local schools and those for which it is not a priority. Be prepared for some "cop out" too, such as the "Well, you're just one of many districts that we work in" routine.

As for meetings, it has been my experience and that of others, that many will say they are interested in coming but will not show up on a seminar day. And, there will be others who will come without prior notice. Reminders and commitment from individual brokers and the Board of Realtors is important.

The job we have is to convince realty board members, brokers and their sales associates that being knowledgeable about schools is a good way to sell houses. The dividends for school districts are obvious. Well informed realtors can carry a good message about schools.

Kenson Siver

Kenson Siver is the Director of Information Services for the Southfield Public Schools. He presently serves on the board of directors of the Michigan School Public Relations Association. He received a B.A. degree from Oakland University in 1967, a Master's degree in social studies education from Wayne State University in 1970, and a doctorate in educational administration from Wayne State in 1986. He currently is president of the Journalism Education Association and formerly served as general chairman of its 1980 Detroit convention.

What it takes to develop effective media relationships

by Nancy Stark, ASPR

Only three ingredients are needed to develop and maintain effective relationships with your print and electronic media:

- Perspicacity
- Patience
- Perseverance

School people who report "good" media relations have developed these characteristics and practice them, most of the time with good effect. School people who report "bad" relationships often have a long list of what's wrong with the other guy. They feel and act like victims in an unmanageable situation. Smart school administrators work on developing the "Three P's" during times of stability. Let's examine them in detail.

Perspicacity means to be discerning, understanding, and in this case, it means knowing how the media operates so you may work smarter, not harder. Whether your school district is one of the two biggest newsmakers in town, or you inhabit a larger milieu where more competition for media space exists, you should find out all you can about your media. What are their deadlines? What resources do they have in staff and equipment? What practices and policies are in effect that have a bearing on your share of media time and space? Know these things and make it easier for the media to provide coverage of your schools.

Patience will pay off when dealing with the media. For one thing, you will find that just when the new education reporter has a reasonable grasp of what property valuation means to a school district, or what test scores really mean, there will be a new one to tutor who has never heard of SEV. Don't let that deter you. Patiently continue to meet the newcomer (and his/her editor) face-to-face, and patiently explain your issues. Using patience to work at this task won't keep you out of the papers when bad news happens, but it can result in a more balanced media perspective on thorny questions.

Don't expect a reporter to weigh what you call "bad" news with what you perceive to be "good" news. News is news. Everything else is a feature story, interesting, or useful information, a bulletin board item, or the report of an activity or event. It takes patience to understand these distinctions when the media is not your primary business.

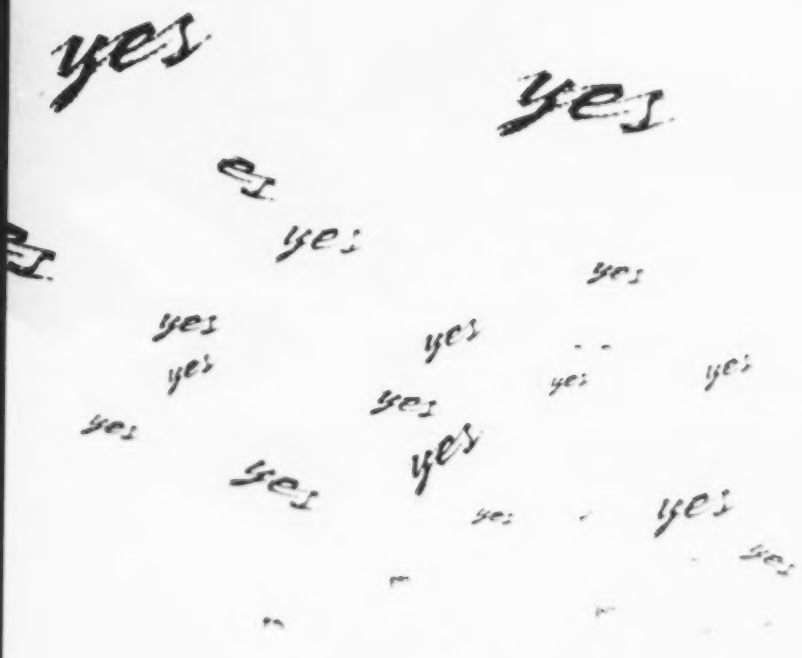
Perseverance, here as elsewhere, means don't give up. If members of the board of education are wrangling publicly, somebody will notice and probably report it. If employees are on strike and picketing the buildings, it will be reported with pictures. If your third graders are grinding corn and making butter, all dressed as latter day pilgrims, don't count on it being reported if it's November. Every elementary school in the area has the same charming story to tell, and they are all competing for the same space. But, don't give up! You do have stories to tell, progress to report, achievements to be recognized, plus activities and events without number. Your media cares about these things. Just persevere and get better at helping your media find out in a timely way. And when you have news to deal with and facts to explain, be organized and prepared to do your part.

One final tip as you practice the Three P's — Don't expect your media to tell all of your story. Bombarded as we all are with messages from every quarter, it is too easy to miss a newspaper account or a two-minute television piece on the schools. Look for other effective ways to carry your news to all of your community — give the members of your community more than one chance to know about you.

Nancy Stark

Nancy Stark is Public Information Director for Oakland Intermediate School District. She is consultant for public relations and communications for the twenty-eight local school districts in Oakland County. An accredited member of the National School Public Relations Association, she is past president of the Michigan School Public Relations Association. After fifteen years experience as a daily newspaper education reporter and editor, Stark, a Michigan State University journalism graduate, was employed by Oakland Schools in 1978.

Marketing Your Millage Election for Fun and Profit!!!



by Susan E. Stuber

A millage campaign is a good example of a marketing effort that all school districts face. Your job is to **sell** the issue of raising taxes to finance good schools to those most likely to **buy or use** the product; members of the "school family." It's not an impossible marketing job.

In planning your millage marketing effort, some key **Campaign Basics** need careful attention.

1. **Successful campaigns tune-in to the community's needs, attitudes and goals for the school district.** This can be done with a community survey, focus-group sessions and/or a townhall meeting.

2. **Winning campaigns are citizen led and supported by the school district staff.** Schools belong to the community. And, community members are a key element in campaign planning, as well as the campaign itself. Parents (of elementary and secondary students), adult and community education students, senior citizens, non-parents, business people, high school students and pre-school parents are vital to your Millage Planning Committee. School employees and board members are represented, too, but work behind the scenes. One or two people from the community, not school employees or board members should be selected (drafted?) to "lead the charge" as campaign chairpersons.

Your job is to sell the issue of raising taxes to finance good schools to those most likely to buy or use the product; members of the school family.

3. Successful campaigners keep the focus on kids. Whether you are speaking to area clubs, drafting a direct-mail piece to send to parents, or laying-out a brochure to help explain the need, keep the focus on how the funds are used to help students. Voters want this information:

- What programs and services does our district need for students?
- What will the funds be used for?
- How do I benefit from passage of this millage?
- How much do you want and what will it cost me to vote YES?

4. Winning campaigners create an election plan and timeline . . . and they follow it! The average campaign is about 8-10 weeks in duration. The first stage is planning. A variety of committees plan their strategies to find YES voters. Stage two is "going public." During this part of the campaign, YES voters are identified. The final phase is Election Day and its all-important strategy for ensuring that YES voters vote! A timeline is developed to keep the campaign on-target. Weekly meetings are held to assess progress and handle problems that can occur.

5. Successful campaigns are targeted to the "school family." The school family is your most likely market for positive support.

Susan E. Stuber

To determine the number of YES votes you need, analyze past millage elections. Determine the greatest number of NO votes you have had in a similar election (consider politics, time of the year, etc.) and add 40% to that number. This is the number of YES voters you need to win. Find them by targeting your campaign to parents, pre-school parents, school employees, community education students, retired school employees, volunteers, booster clubs, students old enough to vote, recent alumni, etc.

6. Winners design an Election Day strategy to get YES voters to the polls. YES voters need help getting to the polls on Election Day. Mail them reminder post cards with a personalized message. Call them on Election Day, as many times as necessary, to get them to vote. Change the message the telephone caller reads as the days go on. Target the message to appeal to each segment of your market. Make the message more urgent as 8:00 p.m. approaches!

You can win at the polls even in the face of an adverse economy. Think like a ***marketeer.*** How can I package this product to convince the buyer that he/she must have it . . .

Susan E. Stuber has been Director of Marketing, Media and Public Relations at Genesee Intermediate School District since November 1992, that organization is the recipient of a grant from the Michigan Department of Education to provide and implement millage technical assistance for Michigan school districts.

Stuber holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Central Michigan University. She has been honored by the Michigan School Public Relations Association for her excellent publications.

Public Service Campaign Links Teachers/Parents

by Mel VandeGevel

One of the questions most frequently asked by parents is, "How can I help my child at home?" That question prompted Grand Rapids Public Schools and its teachers to design an informative new program to provide parents with the kind of information they have been seeking.

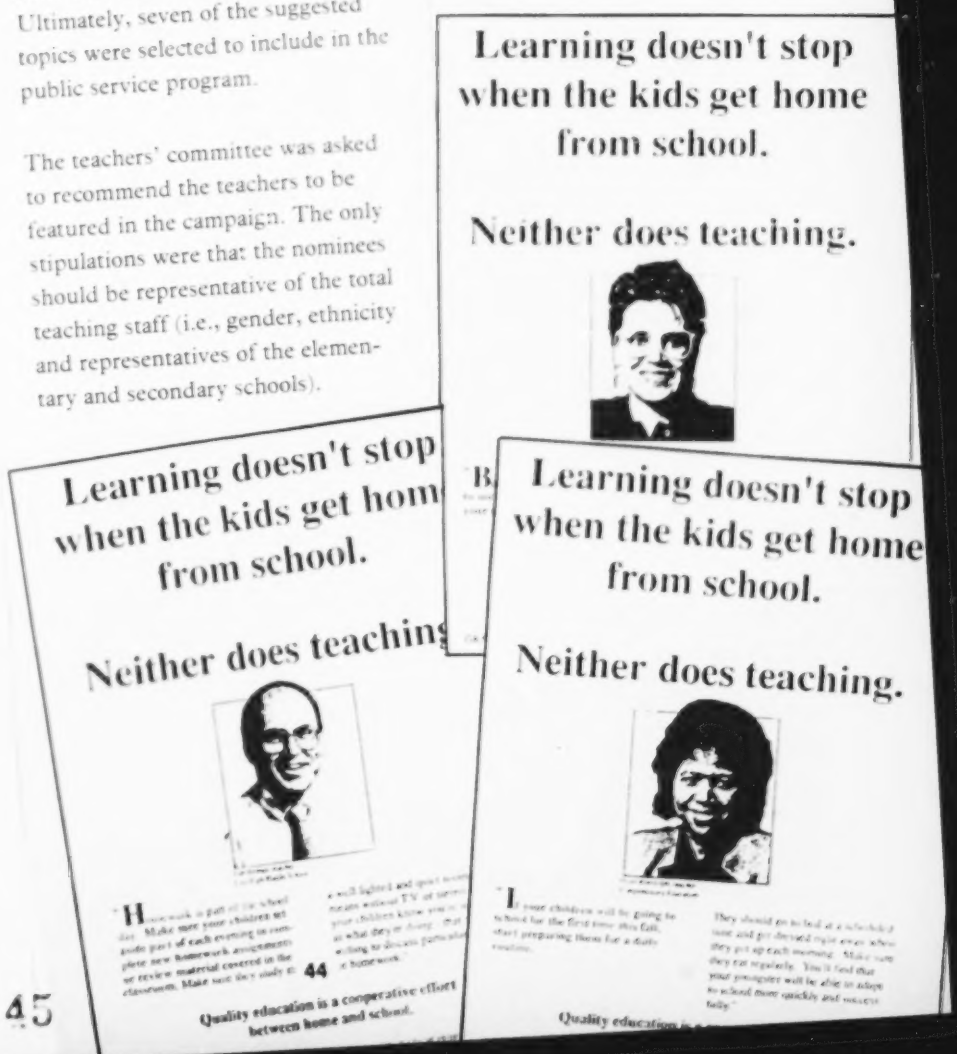
The project concept was originally devised to provide parents with such information as part of a larger marketing program to help position the district in the marketplace. However, the secondary results of the project go far beyond original expectations by also building staff morale and improving school pride.

With the total cooperation and assistance of the Public Relations Committee of the Grand Rapids Education Association, a series of public service announcements (PSA's) were devised for print and broadcast.

Each ad includes a headline which reads, "Learning Doesn't Stop When the Kids Get Home From School. Neither Does Teaching." The headline is followed by a quote from a teacher advising parents on a variety of topics ranging from homework to helping beginning readers.

The Grand Rapids Education Association's newsletter was used to solicit suggestions on the best information to share with parents. The most popular ideas were turned over to the schools' Communications Office for final consideration. Ultimately, seven of the suggested topics were selected to include in the public service program.

The teachers' committee was asked to recommend the teachers to be featured in the campaign. The only stipulations were that the nominees should be representative of the total teaching staff (i.e., gender, ethnicity and representatives of the elementary and secondary schools).


Learning doesn't stop when the kids get home from school.
Neither does teaching.
Learning doesn't stop when the kids get hom from school.
Neither does teachin
Learning doesn't stop when the kids get home from school.
Neither does teaching.
44
Quality education is a cooperative effort between home and school.

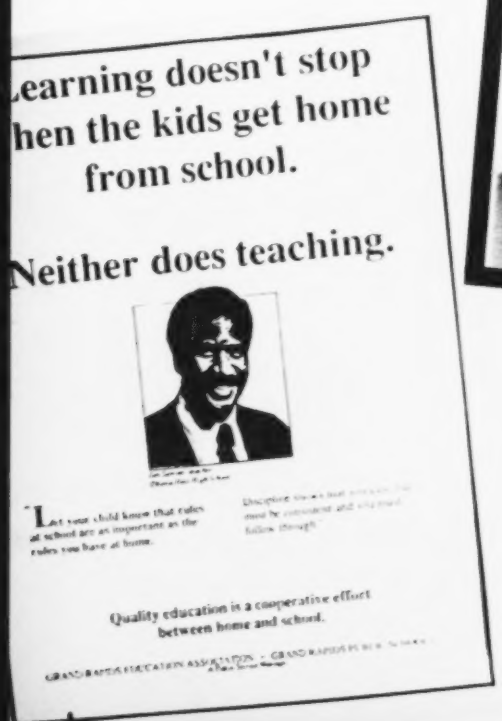
Even though none of the seven teachers had previous on-camera experience, it wasn't evident in the final product. Each of the teachers came across as a dedicated and concerned professional who had important information to share with parents.

Once the PSA's were completed, school officials met with print and broadcast representatives in the metropolitan area to ask for their assistance in promoting the campaign. The video PSA's are also being used on the district operated cable television station and the print ads are published in district publications.

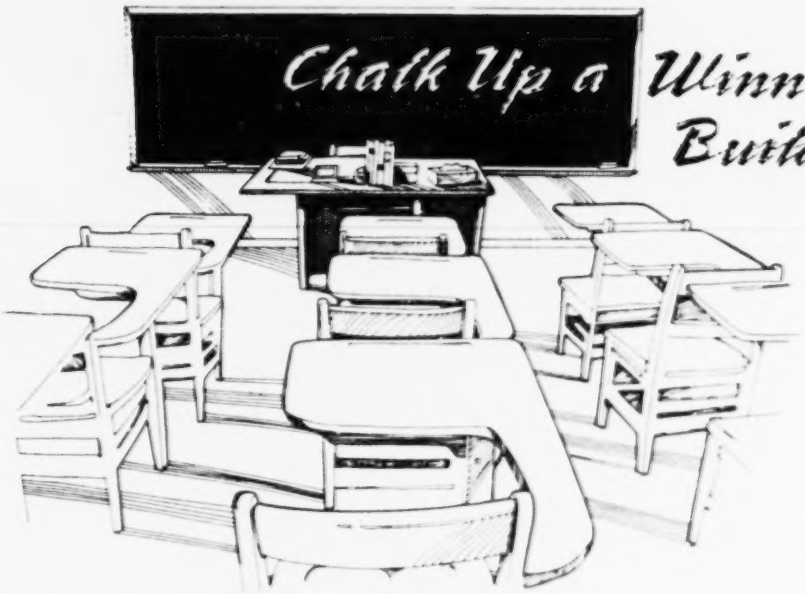
The reaction to the program has been amazing. Teachers are pleased their colleagues are being recognized. Students are excited when they see teachers they know featured in broadcast and print ads. Throughout the metropolitan area, people are impressed with the talented, skilled professionals from the Grand Rapids Public Schools who care enough to participate in such a project.

Oh, yes. Don't forget the parents. They are finally being given the information they've requested, for so many years. They appreciate a response so they can help their kids succeed academically. That way we all win.

Mel VandeGevel


earning doesn't stop
hen the kids get home
from school.
Neither does teaching.
Let your child know that rules
at school are as important as the
rules you have at home.
Quality education is a cooperative effort
between home and school.

Chalk Up a Winning Season for Building Level PR



by Nancy Bregi Warren

Nobody wants to lose in the game of building-level public relations. Just as manager, coach, and players must operate as a team for a successful season . . . the building principal, teaching and support staff, and students also must join forces and work together to be winners for school PR.

Building principals who can analyze the school's PR position, develop strategies to meet their needs, formulate ways to communicate and implement a plan, and then evaluate the success of the entire operation will find they've developed a game plan to effectively market their schools.

Let's look at some key plays in building-level PR . . . some projects that work.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS . . . TEAMMATES IN EDUCATION

Communication between parents and teachers is the best line of defense to avoid school problems. Parents are interested in their children's progress and will attend conferences, and other school functions, if we design them to fit their needs.

- Plan them for days and times that meet the **parents'** schedule. Set them up for all grade and subject levels. Make sure enough time is allowed for both parents and teachers to exchange thoughts and set direction for the students' future.
- Many high school parents want more than a 7-minute running tour through their child's classrooms and daily schedule. Make individual contact with parents of secondary students a goal in your schools.
- Add a few extra touches that show parents you are glad they came. Some suggestions: Have coffee and cookies available in the cafeteria. Use the library to run a video tape highlighting school activities. Provide building tours. Set up times for parents to meet and greet the principal and support staff (include bus drivers, cafeteria workers, counselors, reading consultants . . . the entire school family).
- Remember to inservice the teaching staff on how to hold effective conferences. Good ones don't just happen.

Parent-teacher contact can and should be maintained in other activities in addition to district scheduled conference days. Some suggestions include:

- **Class newsletter** — These can be put out monthly by the classroom teacher in addition to a building newsletter.
- **30 second phone calls** — Evening phone calls to parents which describe something positive their child did in the classroom that day, or something "great" you discovered while checking papers **at home**.

- **Celebrations** — Bring moms, dads, grandparents, community groups and others into the buildings to enjoy special days and special celebrations.
- **Develop "in-house" field trips** — Parents and others in the community can become a handy source for a classroom speakers bureau. It brings them into the building to see how our schools operate and provides the students a chance to hear "real people" talk about their careers.

BUILDING LEVEL ACTIVITIES THAT REACH OUT TO EVERYONE

In addition to contacting parents, schools must also reach out to other audiences in the community. Only about 25% of all adults have children in our K-12 schools.

Contact with non-parents can be established through on-going activities that speak to their needs, such as:

- Establishing the schools' halls as a place for exercise. Mark off "distance traveled" ("you've now walked one mile"). Make sure the walkers can observe student's work **and** students at work.
- Designate a day each week to serve lunch to senior citizens.
- Provide adult and community education that meet the needs and wants of the people they serve.
- Provide free passes for all athletic events and school programs to senior citizens.
- Treat volunteers with tender loving care. They are the school's goodwill ambassadors and can also be real money-savers.
- Preschool and daycare programs offer new parents a chance to start their relationship with your school on a very positive note.

GIVE THE STAFF SOMETHING TO CHEER ABOUT

To get the good word out about schools we need to make sure all the team players understand their support is needed for the team to win. People in the community believe the most reliable information about schools comes from school employees who live in the community. Everyone should know what the PR game plan is, how to execute it, and they need to feel a sense of ownership in the overall process.

Here are some staff development ideas that can add to positive staff morale:

- Build a school PR team that includes representatives from all sectors of the building staff. A representative from this group can also be deployed to meet regularly with the district-wide marketing team.
- A building-level PR team is a good place to initiate staff morale activities, such as, "Caught Being Good Awards" passed between staff members or given by an administrator.

Nancy Bregi Warren

- Rumor control centers can begin to squelch gossip and misinformation. They can work through the PR team or as part of regularly scheduled round table discussion groups.
- "Gift of Time" awards given by the building principal to thank the staff members. The principal takes over a classroom for a teacher for one hour any time during the year. A great gift for the teacher . . . a great chance for the principal to mingle with all the students.
- Projects such as annual fun fairs, craft shows, pep rallies and "dress-up" days can boost the morale of the staff and students, and improve the image of the school to the people in the community.

Nancy Bregi Warren is a Communications Specialist with the Macomb Intermediate School District. Her work in educational public relations evolved from a background in teaching at the elementary and middle school levels.

While teaching at Goodrich Area Schools in Goodrich, Michigan she also took on the responsibility of school public relations coordinator. Setting up a school improvement team to help carry out the district's marketing plan, and working to continually improve staff morale were part of her responsibilities.

Nancy is on the Executive Board of Michigan School Public Relations Association, a member of the National School Public Relations Association, the Public Relations Association of Greater Flint and the International Association of Business Communicators. She works with school districts to develop staff morale programs and set district goals.

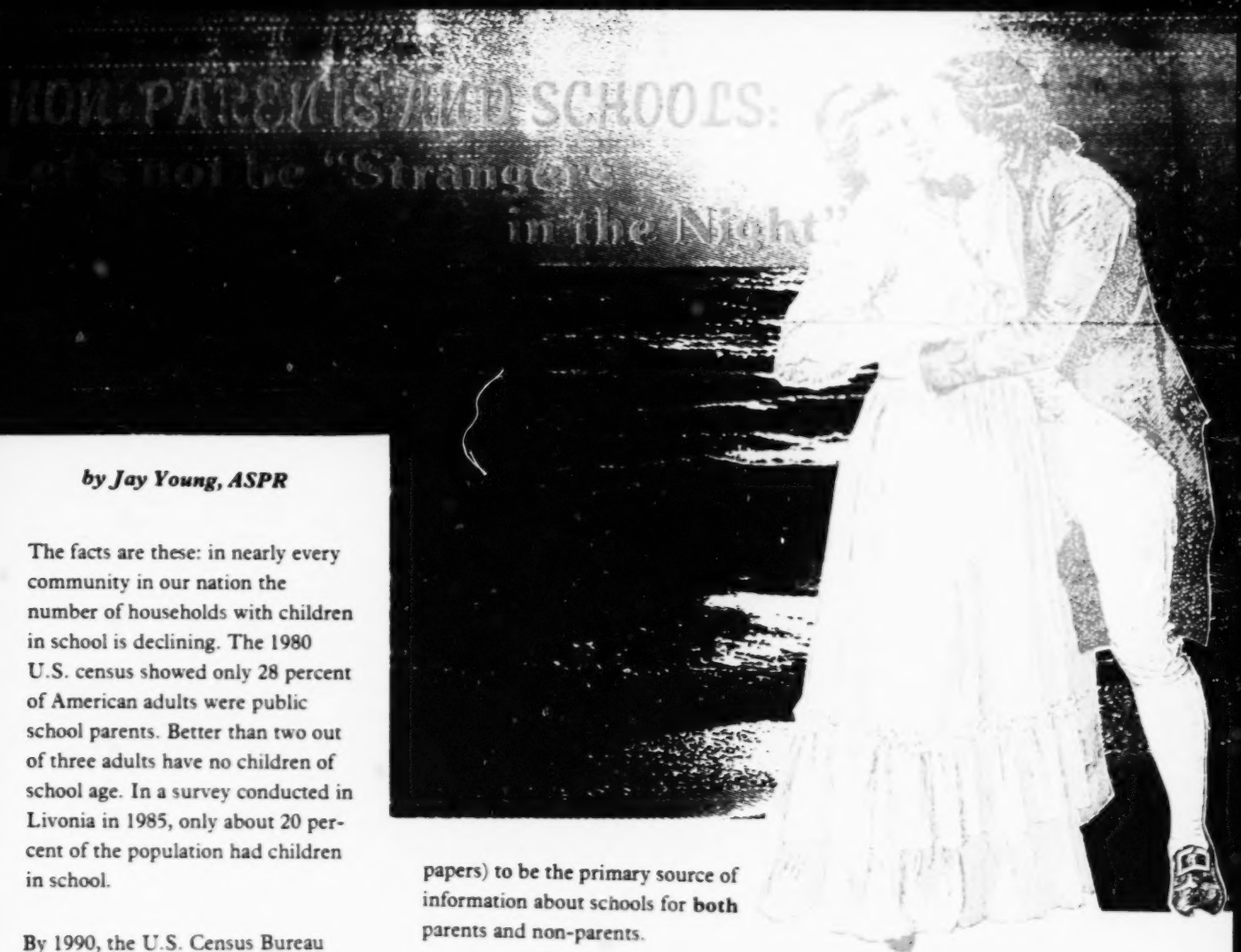
GET OUT THE GOOD WORD

The school setting and the field of education have had the stigma of always trying to be humble. While **we** know we are doing a good job teaching in the classroom, serving meals in the cafeteria, delivering kids to and from school and maintaining a clean, healthy environment for the students, we forget to tell people.

Worse yet, we often think people just naturally know what a great job we're doing. Looking at the 1987 Gallup Poll, we find that among public school parents only 25% feel they are well informed about their local schools. Even more disturbing is the fact that more than half (55%) of those polled who don't have children in school don't know what's going on in the schools.

We can establish a cheering section and garner support for our schools if we: (1) Establish programs that bring people into the building, (2) listen to the concerns of citizens and answer their questions, and (3) communicate on an ongoing basis through newsletters, meetings and activities which inform and involve everyone.

It's helpful to remember we may not win all the games, but we can still have a winning season if we've got the whole squad working to be all they can be in the field of education, and . . . we let everyone know about the excellent job being done!



by Jay Young, ASPR

The facts are these: in nearly every community in our nation the number of households with children in school is declining. The 1980 U.S. census showed only 28 percent of American adults were public school parents. Better than two out of three adults have no children of school age. In a survey conducted in Livonia in 1985, only about 20 percent of the population had children in school.

By 1990, the U.S. Census Bureau projects the number of people age 55 and over will be larger than the entire K-12 school population. By the turn of the century, it is anticipated that one out of every five Americans will be at least 55 years of age.

The questions for school districts, then, are these: Who are these people? And, what is the best way of communicating with them? The answer to the first question is they are many different groups of people: senior citizens, businesses, young marrieds, singles, career people, preschool parents, etc.

The answer to the second question is provided in part by the annual Project Outreach statewide survey that shows the mass media (newspapers) to be the primary source of information about schools for both parents and non-parents.

So, one of our communication strategies as school public relations professionals, should be to establish an excellent working relationship with our local media. How do we do that? We do that through personal contact with the editor and/or reporter responsible for covering the school beat; by promptly answering inquiries in a forthright and honest manner; and by issuing news releases that are well-written and timely. In short, we do all we can to aid your local newspaper in gathering news.

However, hoping the majority of non-parent publics will read and believe the newspaper is not enough. It should be the task of every school district to actively involve as many non-parents with the school system

> *Better than two out of three adults have no children of school age . . . who are these people? And, what is the best way of communicating with them?*

as possible. Research indicates the more people are involved with, and know about an institution, the more likely they are to be supportive and trusting of it.

One effective outreach tool available to most school districts is an active and responsive **community education program**. By offering classes ranging from parenting to job skills to leisure time pursuits, we will involve a number of the non-parent publics and thus gain potential allies from among them.

There are other ways to reach non-parents, that do not require anyone to enroll in district-sponsored classes. These programs have one of two objectives: either they are designed to bring individuals into the schools as visitors or volunteers; or they are designed to bring the schools to the community so that accomplishments are visible. Most successful programs combine these objectives.

One very successful effort pioneered by the Columbus, Ohio school district was a project entitled **"See for Yourself."** "Superintendent Joseph L. Davis's goal was to have his 149 schools welcome 50,000 visitors during the 1981-82 school year. He accomplished that goal by inviting visitors to his schools at any time to see for themselves the activities and education occurring in his schools. He actively marketed his plan via a fifteen minute slide presentation, posters, news releases, and a variety of other methods.

A similar program was instituted in the Ann Arbor schools about the same time entitled, **"I've Been Back to School."** This program, later promoted by the Michigan Education Association, targeted various non-school publics such as elected officials and other professional and business leaders to visit a school for a day as the guests of that schools' teachers and administrators.

In Livonia we adapted this model for a visitation program entitled, **"I've Been Back to see the Good Things Happening in our Schools."** Because of time constraints, we did not require our visitors attend for a long period of time. Rather, we presented a short introductory program, usually involving students and/or an audio-visual presentation and then invited our guests to tour a variety of classrooms or programs. At the end of the two hour visit we concluded with a luncheon and summary remarks. This program was very successful, as judged by the comment cards returned by the participants, many of whom had not been back-to-school for many years.

Another very successful activity begun in Livonia schools two years ago was the establishment of a **"Masterworks"** volunteer art appreciation program. Modeled after "Picture Lady", this program provides opportunity for senior citizens, high school art students,

retired teachers and others to share great works of art with our school children. The program was entitled "Masterworks" to take away the impression that only women may serve as picture ladies. To date, we have nearly 25 schools participating in this program with approximately 100 volunteers from throughout the community.

A third successful outreach to another non-parent public was the establishment of a **Partnership in Education** program in collaboration with the Livonia Chamber of Commerce. This program involves business leaders in the community with our schools, based on meeting mutual needs. For example, a large department store has agreed to work with several local elementary schools to provide a forum for students to display their artwork or put on presentations, such as a mime demonstration. The store also agreed to provide speakers for career day assemblies, has invited high school students to serve as members of their fashion advisory board, will provide tours of their facility for visiting classes, and has agreed to host fashion shows.

Another outreach to our community is provided by **cable television**. In Livonia, the cable television company has dedicated a channel to the Livonia schools. During the first year of operation, a traveling message board was the sole means of programming. However, following the hiring of a professional, part-time videographer, we plan to begin regular "live" programming to air several hours a day. The program is similar in format to a video magazine and will include short vignettes of the many activities in our schools from kindergarten through adult education. The program schedule will be printed in the newspaper and district newsletter.

The senior citizens in our school district are organized into a number of city-sponsored units. For several years, we have published a two-page **senior citizen newsletter** entitled, "Good Things are Happening in our Schools for Senior Citizens", which is inserted into a city-published newsletter distributed to all senior citizen units. This newsletter contains articles relating to programs and activities offered specifically for senior citizens as well as other opportunities for them to become involved in our schools. The city allows us to regularly include our newsletter with theirs at no cost.

There are many other ways to reach non-parents, including district-wide newsletters, the establishment of a speakers' bureau targeted to civic and service organizations and the staging of special events, such as American Education Week.

As in any good public relations plan, it is important to include an evaluation component. Communication is by definition a two-way process. To be complete it must go full-circle with the message sent interpreted and acted upon by the receiver so the sender has feedback on how well the information was received and used.

Jay A. Young

For our "I've Been Back to School" program, we asked each visitor to fill out a response card at the end of the program and solicited comments about the visit. For the various publications distributed by the school system, we regularly conduct readership surveys. Our volunteers and our business community are regularly contacted to ask their suggestions and provide input. Informal feedback, a constant as you increase efforts to involve non-parents, will be another measure of your program's effectiveness. Also, don't forget single-issue surveys are another very effective feedback technique. The State Department's Project Outreach can help you in formulating such a survey.

Considering the statistics and population trends, devoting an important portion of your public relations efforts to reach non-parents may be one of the most important uses of your time and energy. Involving people in our schools and communicating regularly about the good things happening, will pay big dividends when you need to go to your community for financial support.

AFTERWORD

One of the great strengths of the Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA), is the willingness of its members to share ideas and aid their "comrades" in the accomplishment of communication and related tasks required all of school districts in this state.

All school districts must communicate with their constituents, both external and internal. Many MSPRA members have developed excellent district-wide publications for this purpose, winning numerous state and national awards for their efforts. Contact Hilary Nault or Ken Siver or others for help in this area.

School district employees are an important internal audience, and must not be overlooked. Several members have excellent in-house publications. Dick Egli's "Check-up" in Plymouth-Canton is distributed to all employees in their pay envelopes. Jane McKinney in East Lansing has a very popular and attractive staff newsletter.

Of course, there are other ways of communicating with employees. Check with Bill Banach for a description of his communication seminars and management training series.

Working for public institutions, we all must present our cases periodically to voters for the passage of millages or bond issues. Many MSPRA members have much experience in this area. Questions in this area should be addressed to Sue Stuber or Cass Franks.

The content of "Hot Topics" was based on needs identified in a survey of superintendents and public relations professionals from districts throughout the state. Project Outreach sponsored by the State Board of Education under the direction of Ned Hubbell, is an outstanding resource for scientific opinion sampling available to all school districts. Contact Kathy Feaster at the State Department of Education for details. Bill Banach is chairman of his own marketing and research firm and should also be contacted.

For further information on any of the topics in "Hot Topics" please feel free to contact the respective authors. Due to space restrictions, they have had to keep their articles short and have much more to share.

If you're not a member of MSPRA, you should be! Your membership will provide a valuable directory, listing all the authors of "Hot Topics" and approximately 200 other school communication professionals from across the state. You'll also gain access to an excellent lending library of materials on these and many other subjects.

The highlight of MSPRA membership for many is the annual statewide conference, held at varying locations throughout the state. Outstanding speakers and skill building sessions fill two days in May and prepare many school leaders to meet the communication challenges of their districts. Perhaps equally important, members use this opportunity to meet others from across the state to discuss similar problems and solutions and develop an informal, professional network that can last for years.

There are many other services provided by membership in MSPRA and National School Public Relations Association. Contact any officer for details.

We are indeed fortunate to have among our members, professionals recognized nationally for their expertise in many areas of school public relations. We are also proud to have more members accredited by the National School Public Relations Association than any other state in the nation. That testifies to our commitment to advance the cause of education through positive communications.

Finally, we hope "Hot Topics" has answered your questions and provided useful information and ideas. That was our purpose. We stand ready to help you in your efforts to educate our children.

— the editors

APPENDIX A

TABLE FOR DETERMINING SAMPLE SIZE FROM A GIVEN POPULATION

(95%/+5%)

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	308
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note — N is population size S is sample size

Source: Educational and Psychological Measurement

APPENDIX B — SURVEY TECHNIQUES

MAIL QUESTIONNAIRES

Advantages

- Widely scattered respondents
- Low cost
- Reached in homes and offices
- Answered more thoughtfully (more time)
- No interviewer bias
- Personal data more easily collected

Disadvantages

- Low return rate
- Answers omitted
- Questions misunderstood
- Certain types of people tend to respond (bias)
- Cost of inducements may be high
- Mailing list difficult to obtain
- No interviewer observation to reactions
- Lack of representativeness (no control)

When to use questionnaires (mail)

- When questions can be answered quickly
- When you have homogeneous groups
- When mailing lists are available
- When needed to reach certain respondents
- When time available to collect data

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

When to use telephone

- When universe consists of people with phones
- When few short questions required
- Interesting topic to keep people on phone
- When short time frame required
- When observation unnecessary

Advantages

- Information collected in short period of time
- Time to occur during specific times
- Low cost
- Names and addresses available
- Can reach difficult to reach people

Disadvantages

- Limited to persons with phones
- Must be short questionnaire
- Simple short answers required
- Difficult to get classification information

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Advantages

- Higher response rate
- Increased accuracy with well trained interviewers
- Interviewer can estimate some personal information
- More representative

Disadvantages

- Expensive if scattered locations
- Poor interviewers may bias response
- Good training of interviewers is required
- Some information difficult to obtain face to face
- Interview can be considered an intrusion
- Quick response required may mean inaccuracies

When to use personal interviews

- When a large quantity of information is required
- When you can get qualified interviewers
- When enough time and money to recruit and train
- When no embarrassing information is required
- When depth interview is required
- When small geographic area is required
- When small geographic area is of interest

APPENDIX C

WHAT SHOULD REALTY SALESPEOPLE KNOW ABOUT LOCAL SCHOOLS?

What should realty people know about the local school system to assist them in selling homes? Try this list for starters . . . school PR people may have to "cut the glove to fit the hand" as not all items are appropriate for every community or school situation.

- The level and value of education in the community
- Teacher/pupil ratio and/or class size
- Per pupil expenditures (comparatively)
- Percentage of local school taxes paid by homeowners
- Track record on millage/bond elections
- Student achievement/test scores/awards/recognition
- Percentage of graduates that go on to college or higher training
- Teacher salaries (comparatively)
- Support services
- Special education services
- Educational programs — Vocational, gifted, bilingual, remedial, early childhood, etc.
- Scope of extracurricular activities
- Transportation — school policy, safety, etc.
- Volunteer opportunities
- Curriculum innovations and how the schools have responded to new ideas/trends in education
- Staff inservice
- Attendance areas
- Substance abuse programs

GOOD SCHOOLS SELL HOUSES!!!

MSPA

Michigan School Public Relations Association